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Maghreb ministers meet

RABAT (R) — Foreign ministers from the five North African states met in Rabat Monday to breathe new life into the Arab Maghreb Union (AMU), which has been stalled by domestic problems in member states. Officials said their agenda included fixing a date and place for an AMU summit which was originally scheduled to be held in Libya during the Gulf war but was postponed indefinitely. Mauritania was due to take over the rotating chairmanship from Libya this year. But because of domestic issues, Mauritania asked Morocco to take over instead. The Casablanca daily Al Bayan said regional cooperation plans drafted by the AMU had been neglected since the union was formed in February 1989 because of protests in Mauritania and Morocco against economic hardship. "Algeria and Tunisia have had to deal with a powerful upsurge of the (Muslim) fundamentalist phenomenon," the newspaper said. Al Bayan added that an important agenda item would be the holding of a Mediterranean conference between AMU member states and France, Italy, Portugal and Spain, as proposed by French President Francois Mitterrand during a recent visit to Tunisia. AMU members Algeria, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco and Tunisia plan to create a customs union and free market by the end of the century, similar to the European Community, by far the Maghreb's main trading partner.

League urges implementation of 425

BEIRUT (R) — Arab League Secretary-General Esmat Abdul Meguid urged the United Nations Monday to press Israel to pull its troops out of South Lebanon. Mr. Abdul Meguid, on a Middle East tour to heal Arab rifts over the Gulf crisis, said the international community had to do its utmost to implement U.N. Resolution 425 calling for an unconditional Israeli withdrawal from Lebanon. "Resolution 425 is definitive with regard to the Israeli withdrawal from Lebanon," he told reporters. "The world community, be it the U.N. or the Arab League, has to work to implement this resolution." Israel and its South Lebanese Army militia allies occupy a 15-km deep "security zone" set up by the Jewish state in 1985. Lebanon's President Elias Hrawi has asked Washington to urge Israel to leave Lebanon and allow him to extend his authority across the country after 16 years of civil war. Mr. Hrawi's government argues that Israel has no pretext to stay after Lebanese troops disarmed about 6,000 Palestine Liberation Organisation guerrillas holding bases in the south. Mr. Abdul Meguid said Resolution 425 should be tackled as a separate issue, not as part of other Middle East resolutions calling for an Israeli withdrawal from the occupied Arab territories.

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Hurd in Turkey for talks on Iraq

ANKARA (R) — Britain's Foreign Secretary Douglas Hurd arrived in Turkey Monday for talks expected to cover Iraq and an allied rapid reaction force based in Turkey. Mr. Hurd was to hold formal talks with Turkish Foreign Minister Sefa Geyik later Monday and meet Prime Minister Mesut Yilmaz and President Turgut Ozal before leaving Tuesday. Bilateral relations and Cyprus are expected to figure on his agenda. His arrival follows a visit by Mr. Hurd to Turkey in January that was cut short by an urgent European Community (EC) meeting on the Gulf crisis.

Kuwait refinery to restart next month

NICOSIA (AP) — Kuwait's Mina Al Ahmadi refinery, the least damaged of the emirate's four refineries, will be producing 90,000 to 100,000 barrels a day by the end of August, the Middle East Economic Survey (MEES) reported Monday. Initial repairs on the facility, which had a pre-war capacity of 370,000 barrels a day, should be completed by early next month, the oil industry newsletter said. Kuwaiti newspapers reported July 10 that the government has a \$11 million contract with the Milan-based Petrochemical International Instruments Co. to repair and maintain electrical equipment at Mina Al Ahmadi. Starting up the damaged refinery again will provide products for domestic consumption, with some naphtha available for export. Mina Al Ahmadi is Kuwait's most modern refinery. The other refineries at Mina Abdullah, Mina Shuaiba and Mina Sand, were more seriously damaged in the war.

Powell in Moscow

MOSCOW (AP) — The superpowers' top military officers grined and greeted each other warmly Monday when U.S. Chief of Staff General Colin Powell arrived at Moscow's Sheremetyevo airport. Gen. Powell told reporters he and Soviet Gen. Mikhail Moiseyev were meeting "as friends and soldiers, committed to the security of our countries, and to peace. The more we talk to one another, the more we argue, the more we debate, the better off we are." Gen. Powell told reporters the weeklong visit would be his third meeting with Gen. Moiseyev in just two months. The visit is the latest in a series of formal exchanges of top military brass. It has been planned since Gen. Moiseyev took a similar tour of American bases in October. It is unrelated to next week's summit meeting between George Bush and Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev, who will sign a treaty cutting long-range nuclear weapons.

Khartoum offers money to rebels who defect

KHARTOUM (AP) — Sudan's military government is trying to buy defectors from the ranks of southern rebels, a top official said. Colonel Mohammad Amin Al Khalifa, a member of the ruling junta, told reporters the government will pay up to 20,000 Sudanese pounds (\$1,665) as compensation to fighters who quit the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA). The money is to help the guerrillas reintegrate into society and find jobs. Col. Khalifa said at a Sunday night news conference.

Death rate from cholera reported highest in Africa

GENEVA (R) — Cholera sweeping through Africa is killing people at a much higher rate than in Latin America, the World Health Organisation (WHO) said Monday. The Geneva-based U.N. agency said the death rate in 10 affected African countries averaged 20 to 30 per cent and climbed as high as 50 per cent in some areas. By contrast, the average death rate in Latin America's current epidemic was two per cent.

Baker hopes Israel will accept plan; peace talks could begin in October

Shamir said to have given favourable assessment of U.S. proposal to cabinet

Combined agency dispatches

U.S. SECRETARY of State James Baker met with Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir Monday and said afterwards that he hoped Israel would accept a Middle East peace conference proposal already accepted by Arab states.

According to Israeli Radio, Mr. Baker also told Mr. Shamir that there had been a "revolutionary" change in the attitude of Syria and that the Bush administration believed that if properly followed up a peace conference could be convened in Washington in October this year.

The Israeli cabinet met shortly after Mr. Baker and Mr. Shamir completed four hours of meetings over two days. No final decision was made on the Israeli response to the U.S. proposals for a peace conference, Israeli sources said.

Mr. Baker left Israel Monday for Malaysia for a meeting of the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN).

Mr. Shamir gave the cabinet a favourable assessment of the latest U.S. effort and Arab response, according to the sources. He referred to the position first

taken by Syria in a letter to U.S. President George Bush and now adopted by other Arab countries of a willingness to enter into face-to-face talks with Israel.

Mr. Shamir was quoted by Yossi Ahimeir, a key adviser, as having told the cabinet there had been a "revolutionary change" in Syria's attitude.

But Mr. Ahimeir, appearing on Israeli Television, added: "We want, first of all, to know what is the true Syrian position" on negotiations with Israel.

Also, the Shamir aide said, "the central problem is the composition of the Palestinian delegation" that would attend peace talks.

Mr. Ahimeir said Israel is waiting for clarifications from the Americans concerning the composition of the Palestinian delegation.

Israel seeks to exclude Palestinians from Arab Jerusalem from the talks. In Mr. Shamir's view, their participation would cast doubt on Israel's claim to the Arab half of the city that Israel "annexed" after the 1967 war.

Foreign Minister David Levy said on Israeli army radio: "Those who want to ignore the change,

maybe don't want to see it. But the Syria of today apparently is a Syria that is developing. It has left behind the previous 'nos', and is entering the road to peace. It agrees today to direct talks without conditions and also without any promises behind our backs."

Following a 90-minute session with Mr. Shamir, Mr. Baker said the Israeli official had promised him an early answer on whether the Jewish state would endorse the U.S. proposal. The formula calls for Israel to negotiate directly with the Arabs on a settlement requiring Israel to relinquish territory in exchange for acceptance from the Arabs.

Israel Radio quoted Mr. Shamir as telling his cabinet that Mr. Baker believed that a peace conference could be convened in Washington in October if Israel agreed to the U.S. proposals.

Mr. Baker called on the Jewish state to seize an "historic opportunity."

Mr. Shamir's office also said a reply could come in days. "Baker was ... very cautious not to set any dates, any target dates, but I

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Iraq's oil production capacity reportedly rises to 1.45m bpd

NICOSIA (AP) — Iraq's oil production capacity has reached 1.45 million barrels a day about two-fifths of its pre-war level, with some one million barrels available for export, the Middle East Economic Survey (MEES) reported Monday.

But it quoted a United Nations report as saying that it will take \$6 billion and two years' work to restore Iraq's war-damaged oil industry to its pre-war level.

The respected oil industry newsletter quoted the report as saying the Iraqis believe they can boost production capacity to 1.6 million barrels a day by the end of the year.

The Oil Ministry believes the pre-war production level of 3.14 million barrels daily could be restored by mid-1992 if Iraq can obtain the equipment needed to carry out repairs, the survey quoted the report as saying.

Iraq's pre-war production

capacity was 3.5 million barrels daily.

Its oil installations, particularly refineries, petrochemical plants and pumping stations, were heavily damaged in allied bombing during the 43-day Gulf war.

The U.N. report, compiled by an investigative mission led by Prince Sadruddin Aga Khan, said that Iraqi expectations were "rather optimistic" and were unlikely to be met unless Baghdad was also allowed to import equipment for repairs.

The report said the U.N. team did not expect "a full rehabilitation of production capacity before the end of 1992 at the earliest" even if the Security Council lifts economic sanctions imposed last August and permits the Iraqis to import the necessary equipment.

U.N. Secretary-General Javier Perez de Cuellar recommended Jan. 15 that Iraq should be

allowed to resume some oil exports for a limited period so that the United Nations can be paid for destroying the country's weapons of mass destruction under the terms of an April ceasefire resolution.

Prince Sadruddin the same day issued a report in Geneva recommending that the ban on oil exports should be partially lifted so that Baghdad can earn revenue to buy urgently needed medicines and foodstuffs.

If Iraq was allowed to export one million barrels a day, it could earn an estimated \$5.5 billion in a year at current prices.

MEES said that even if Iraq was allowed to sell oil "which is far from certain, it would be some time before actual exports could begin."

The Americans and British

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Resistance attacks SLA post

RASHAYA, Lebanon (AP) — Resident fighters infiltrated into Israel's self-designated "security zone" in South Lebanon Monday and showered an outpost of Israeli-affiliated Lebanese militiamen with mortar fire amid heightening tension in the region.

Police said a casualty report was not available and the affiliation and number of the infiltrators was not known.

The attack on the South Lebanon Army (SLA) position in the village of Shwayya occurred just after midnight (2100 GMT Sunday), police said. The fate of the guerrillas could not be determined.

Reporters, watching from highlands, said they counted eight mortar rounds crashing into the SLA position on the northeastern tip of the "security zone."

SLA artillerymen retaliated by shelling the villages of 'Ain Ata and Al Khilwat, six kilometres north of the Israeli-occupied enclave, the police report said.

Israeli helicopter gunships hovered overhead as the shelling was under way. But the Israelis apparently were not involved in the latest unrest, the police added.

U.N. sanctions body hears report on plight of Iraqis

UNITED NATIONS (Agencies) — The Security Council's Sanctions Committee was to hear a report Monday from U.N. envoy Prince Sadruddin Aga Khan on the worsening plight of Iraqi civilians but no immediate decision was expected on any easing of sanctions, committee sources said.

They said the committee, which met behind closed doors, would receive a first-hand briefing from Prince Sadruddin, the U.N. secretary-general's executive delegate for humanitarian operations in Iraq and the Gulf, on a report he issued in Geneva last Monday saying sanctions were causing Iraqis undue suffering.

Prince Sadruddin suggested Baghdad be allowed, under close U.N. supervision, to sell some oil or use assets frozen abroad, to import food, medicine, agricultural items and equipment needed to restore war-damaged water, sewage, electrical, oil industry and communications facilities.

He said Iraq had the capacity to export about one million barrels of oil a day, enough to raise about \$5.5 billion to revenue over a year.

Committee members said Prince Sadruddin would probably also answer questions related to his report but that no decision

would be taken yet on whether to ease sanctions imposed on Iraq since its invasion of Kuwait last August.

Iraq asked the committee earlier this month to let it sell \$1.5 billion worth of oil to buy food, medicine and agricultural items.

Secretary General Javier Perez de Cuellar, in a report last week, also recommended that Iraq be allowed to resume the sale of some oil to meet U.N. costs — estimated at a minimum of \$200 million — of scrapping Baghdad's weapons of mass destruction in accordance with an April 3 Gulf war ceasefire resolution.

All Security Council ambassadors attended the closed briefing, so that the meeting

Prince Sadruddin did not comment as he entered the session, but had scheduled a news conference later Monday.

Western diplomats said they did not expect any easing of the oil embargo until Iraq has disclosed everything about its clandestine weapons programmes.

The five permanent Security Council members say Iraq must make a full disclosure by Thursday, but have not said what will happen if Iraq fails to do so. The five are the United States, Britain, China, France and the Soviet Union.

Palestinians want U.S. to acknowledge in public their right to self-determination

From Daoud Kattab in Jerusalem

PALESTINIAN representatives who met with U.S. Secretary of State James Baker in his latest peace shuttle said Monday that they were demanding a public American acknowledgement of the Palestinian people's right to self-determination.

Faisal Hussein, one of the three who met with Mr. Baker, told a press conference here that the group had asked "many questions of the Americans" and that the U.S. side "answered some in a negative way and others they have not answered."

Declining to reveal any details of the talks, Mr. Hussein said that "on the issue of Jerusalem, the Americans have told us that their position ... has not changed. They still consider East (Arab) Jerusalem to be

part of the occupied territories."

"The meeting with Mr. Baker was important and serious but we still believe that the Israeli position remains as the major obstacle," Mr. Hussein said.

Hanan Ashrawi, another member of the group which met Mr. Baker, said: "We carried out the meetings upon the request of the Americans and the consent of the PLO (Palestine Liberation Organisation). We had a specific task to explore and not to negotiate. We have informed the PLO of the details of the talks and they have the power to make any binding decisions. It is up to the Israelis to make their position clear. They have placed preconditions."

Asked what his response was to Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir's statement that

there is a revolutionary Arab position, Mr. Hussein said:

"The Arab position in favour of peace is not new. They had already supported back in 1988 the Palestinian peace initiative which was declared in the 19th session of the Palestine National Council."

"In order to go ahead we need clear and obvious answers to our questions," he added.

Ms. Ashrawi said: "Palestinian representation is an independent Palestinian decision not the subject of choice or veto by any other party. We know that the Americans prefer a joint Jordanian-Palestinian delegation we still prefer an independent delegation. But in case of a joint delegation we insist that our separate and independent national identity be preserved."

Asked what are some of the clear statement Palestinians would want from the Americans, Mr. Hussein said: "We need clear and public acknowledgement of the Palestinian people's right to self-determination."

Asked about the possibility of Jordan or Syria going alone, Mr. Hussein said: "It is a Palestinian problem and I can't imagine solving this problem without Palestinians."

Ms. Ashrawi responded to the same question: "It is a two-track approach and if one of the tracks is not working then the whole process will fail."

Asked to comment about the news that coincided with Mr. Baker's visit that four new settlements were being built, Mr. Hussein said: "This

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Bush leaves Turkey

ISTANBUL (AP) — President George Bush's farewell address in Turkey Monday included new pledges of support for Ankara: A promise of more military assistance and \$1 million to help cope with Gulf war refugees.

Mr. Bush, at a brief airport departure ceremony, also made one last appeal for Turkey and Greece to resolve their 17-year-old dispute concerning Turkish occupation of part of Cyprus.

"If the wall in Berlin can fall to human brotherhood, so can ancient hatred on Cyprus," Mr. Bush said.

But Cyprus Monday joined Greece in rejecting a Turkish proposal backed by Mr. Bush for a four-party conference on the problem of the war-divided island (see page 2).

In his departure remarks, Mr. Bush said his administration planned to remain engaged in the search for a solution to the Cyprus dispute, working with Turkey, Greece and the Greek and Turkish Cypriot population in support of the negotiating effort led by the United Nations.

Mr. Bush also pledged to "stand side by side in maintaining an international force to preserve stability on your southeastern frontier." The comment referred to the allied rapid deployment force stationed on the Iraqi border in Turkey.

Turkish President Turgut Ozal thanked Mr. Bush for making the two-day visit and said it highlighted the "determination of our two countries to follow an ever-closer relationship."

At his last meeting Mr. Ozal over breakfast, Mr. Bush said, "I leave here very optimistic about Turkey's future."

From across the table, Mr. Ozal said, "I am very much satisfied" with the outcome of the discussions with Mr. Bush.

Asked by reporters about Secretary of State James Baker's travels through the Middle East, Mr. Bush said, "From what we see, things seem to be going reasonably well."

Throughout his two-day trip to Turkey, Mr. Bush praised Mr. Ozal for Turkey's stalwart support in the Gulf war.

Rewarding Mr. Ozal for his solidarity, Mr. Bush pledged support for a package of 160 F-16 fighter jets to be built in Turkey. Sources said the president would seek money from Congress for 80 of the planes and ask allies in the Gulf to pay for the others.

On Mr. Bush's last night on the road, Mr. Ozal threw a state dinner in the ornate ceremonial hall of Dolmabahce Palace on the western bank of the Bosphorus Straits. The entertainment was a flashy fashion show.

Mr. Bush used the occasion to urge Turkey to settle bitter differences with Greece, particularly in their dispute over Cyprus.

"I am confident that Turkey can rise to this challenge."

Sharaa and Kaddoumi meet in Damascus on peace process

DAMASCUS (Agencies) — Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) officials discussed with Foreign Minister Farouq Al Sharaa Monday the U.S.-led Middle East peace process and the makeup of a Palestinian delegation to proposed Arab-Israeli negotiations.

The delegation, led by Farouq Kaddoumi, head of the Political Department of the PLO, arrived Sunday on a previously unannounced visit that coincided with U.S. Secretary of State James Baker's arrival in Israel.

Mr. Sharaa said he explained to the delegation "Syria's stand" after President Hafez Al Assad's acceptance last week of U.S. President George Bush's proposal for a regional peace conference cosponsored by the United States and the Soviet Union.

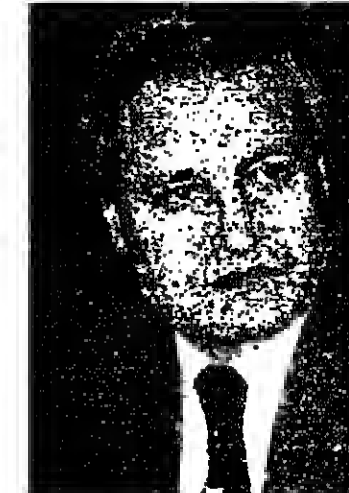
"We also discussed Palestinian representation," Mr. Sharaa told reporters after the three-hour session. He was referring to one of the major hurdles holding up agreement on the proposed regional conference.

On Sunday, the PLO dropped its insistence on attending a Middle East peace conference. It said Palestinian delegates, chosen by the PLO from inside and outside the Israeli-occupied territories, could speak for the Palestinians.

Israel has adamantly rejected any role for the PLO in the peace process.

During his fifth Middle East tour this year, Mr. Baker won the backing of Syria, Egypt, Jordan and Lebanon for the proposed conference. But Israel still has not committed itself either way.

Mr. Kaddoumi's delegation comprised three other members



Farouq Al Sharaa



Farouq Kaddoumi

of the PLO's 15-man Executive Committee — Yasser Abed Rabbo, Abu Ali Mustafa and Suleiman Najjar.

This was their second trip to Damascus in recent weeks. Last month, they flew from Tunis to cement a rapprochement after about 1,100 Palestinians were freed from Syrian jails.

The PLO-Syria relations had been damaged by a 1983 feud that followed Syria's backing of mutineers who sought to unseat PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat.

A PLO spokesman told Reuters a delegation of PLO executive committee members was in Cairo and would go to Amman for talks on the peace process.

The PLO has not been invited to take part in talks with Mr. Baker, who met three Palestinian nationalists in occupied Jerusalem on his latest shuttle.

Mahmoud Abbas was leading the delegation in Cairo.

Egyptian President Hosni

Mubarak once again on Monday urged Israel to accept the U.S. proposals and stop building settlements in the occupied territories.

Mr. Mubarak said that Israel had sent Jewish settlers to 65 per cent of the Arab territory it occupies. Soon, he said, there will be no Arab lands to negotiate about.

"The peace process has to be continued. The Arab parties have agreed on a positive and constructive position that will open the way for negotiations," Mr. Mubarak said.

"It's now up to Israel to make up its mind, stand up to its responsibilities and accept the basis that the international community has accepted for a peaceful settlement."

Mr. Mubarak discussed the search for regional peace in a televised 40-minute speech to commemorate the 39th

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12 killed in Yugoslav violence

OHRID, Yugoslavia (Agencies) — Ten Croatian policemen and two civilians were reported killed in a fierce battle in breakaway Croatia Monday and Yugoslav leaders said they feared a catastrophe if "last chance" peace talks failed.

Tanjung news agency said mortar and machinegun battles erupted around dawn in the eastern Croatian town of Mirkovci, 120 kilometres northwest of Belgrade, and the 12 people were killed as hand-to-hand fighting broke out.

Croatian radio said federal warplanes and Croatian national guardsmen exchanged fire in Vinkovci, but the report could not immediately be confirmed.

It appeared to be the heaviest fighting since orthodox Serbs took up arms to oppose secessionist moves by the leaders of the predominantly Roman Catholic republic of Croatia.

It cast a shadow over a peace summit scheduled to start within hours between the heads of the six Yugoslav republics, the eight-member state presidency and top government leaders in the lakeside resort of Ohrid, far to the south in the republic of Macedonia.

The Yugoslav leaders convened the meeting, expected to last two days, to seek ways to end the country's crisis and keep its political system functioning.

They hoped to reach an agreement guaranteeing that Serbs and Croats would end the fighting which has killed scores of people since the northern republics of Croatia and Slovenia declared independence last month.

"We face a catastrophic situation in the country," State Presidency member Vasil Tupurkovski told reporters in Ohrid in the southern corner of Yugoslavia close to Albania and Greece.

"This agreement should ensure there will be no bloodshed... and secure the basic functioning of the country's system."

The Serbian newspaper Politika said: "Ohrid is really the last chance for peace in Yugoslavia."

The meeting at Ohrid was called for republican leaders to sign a document guaranteeing peace for a three-month period, said Mr. Tupurkovski, Macedonia's representative to the presidency and the host of the meeting.

Yugoslav Premier Ante Markovic also was to propose measures to keep the federal government functioning during the interim.

Similar meetings in the past

have been futile and the inability to reach a political agreement has plunged the country close to civil war.

Yugoslav Defence Minister Veljko Kadijevic has said the army might take action if the presidency and the republic leaders fail to agree on a plan the country's future by Aug.

"We are faced with a catastrophic situation in the country," Mr. Tupurkovski told reporters.

"The agreement should ensure that there will be no bloodshed in the interim period and secure the country's bare existence."

Seven Serbs were killed Sunday in the Banja region south of Zagreb and 12 were arrested when Croatian police attacked alleged Serb strongholds, Croatian Information Minister Hrvoje Hitrec said Monday.

More than 100 people have been killed in clashes between Serbs and Croats since May.

On June 25, Croatia and the neighbouring republic of Slovenia declared independence from Yugoslavia.

The federal military intervened in Slovenia after that republic seized its border posts with Italy, Austria and Hungary. At least 64 people were killed in fighting there.

Cyprus rejects Turkish proposal for peace talks

NICOSIA (R) — Cyprus Monday rejected Turkish proposals backed by the U.S. for talks on the future of the divided island but said priority should be given to the substance of the dispute and not the procedure.

"We reject four-way talks," Cyprus government spokesman Akis Fantis said in response to pressure by Cypriot reporters. U.S. President George Bush said in Ankara Saturday Turkey's proposal for four-way talks was "the best hope for peace and the best hope for a solution to the Cyprus problem."

Mr. Fantis said in a written statement: "As far the four-way talks are concerned, I would like to repeat that our proposal still stands."

Cyprus has proposed bringing together the governments of Greece, Turkey and Cyprus, representatives of the Greek — and Turkish-Cypriot communities and the five permanent members of the U.N. Security Council.

Turkey and the Turkish Cypriots want talks between Greece, Turkey and the two communities, but Athens and the Greek Cypriots fear this will imply recognition of the breakaway Turkish Cypriot state.

"As we have always stressed, priority should be given not to the procedure but the substance of the Cyprus problem and especially for the Turkish side to respond with reasonable proposals on the questions put by the (U.N.) secretary general, more specifically on the issues of territory and the refugees," Mr. Fantis said.

Cyprus has been divided by barbed wire and minefields since Turkey invaded in 1974, after a short-lived coup in Nicosia engineered by the military junta then ruling Greece.

Turkey has about 30,000 troops

in the north, proclaimed a separate state in 1983 and recognised only by Ankara.

U.N. Secretary-General Javier Perez de Cuellar has been trying to restart talks which broke down last year.

Government sources said they were pleased Mr. Bush raised the Cyprus problem several times in Turkey and felt this was a vindication of the Greek-Cypriot position that Ankara holds the key to settlement.

"Mr. Bush urged Turkey to abandon its intransigent stand. He said the status quo is unacceptable, and that it is time for a solution. It has always been our position that Turkey is the key to a settlement," one government source told Reuters.

"We have to concentrate on the substance and not get carried away with discussing procedures which is exactly what Turkey wants."

Turkish-Cypriot leader Rauf Denktash said the problem of the island "could not be solved with outside intervention and pressure."

"It is understood that the artificial storm created over the Bush visits to Athens and Ankara is over without any damage to the cause," he said in a statement.

Mr. Denktash said Turkish Cypriots had been the victims of "injustice and discrimination" in the past.

"Turkish-Cypriots have have no guilt in the creation of the problem and its dragging on for so many years," he said.

EC loans

Cyprus is to receive European Community (EC) loans and aid worth 20 million European currency units (\$23.4 million), an official announcement said Monday.

Algerian justice minister resigns

ALGIERS (AP) — Justice Minister Ali Benflis has quit the government, reportedly in protest over army intrusion in law enforcement since a state of emergency was declared last month to curb militant Muslim fundamentalists.

President Chadli Benjedid's press office issued a communique late Sunday announcing that Mr. Benflis had been "discharged from his functions for personal reasons."

But the independent newspaper Al Watan reported Monday that Mr. Benflis resigned in protest over the army's virtual seizure of the legal apparatus since Mr. Benjedid decreed the emergency June 5.

Al Watan said Mr. Benflis argued with Prime Minister Sidahmad Ghazali over "the manner in which justice is being directed. In the eyes of Mr. Benflis, it has become a bit too much the property of the army."

The communique Sunday said that Mr. Benflis had been replaced by lawyer Hamdani Benkellil on Mr. Ghazali's recommendation.

The army has carried out a bloody crackdown to stop street agitation by the fundamentalist Islamic Salvation Front. More than 50 people have been killed in clashes with security forces and 5,800 arrested.

The party's top leaders remain in custody at the military prison at Blida and have been charged by a military tribunal with fomenting armed rebellion.

The front had been staging strikes and violent demonstrations to demand early presidential elections and changes in the rules for legislative voting scheduled for June 27.

U.S. blocks British jets sale to Iran Air

NICOSIA (AP) — The United States has blocked the sale of up to 50 BAE 146 airliners to Iran by British Aerospace because Western hostages held by pro-Iranian extremists have not been freed, Flight International reported Monday.

The aviation weekly said in an article made available to the Associated Press in advance of publication that Washington was able to do so because the British-built aircraft contain U.S.-made components.

Its avionics are produced by the Honeywell Corporation and its four turbofan engines are manufactured by Textron Lycoming.

U.S. trade sanctions imposed on Iran in 1979 prohibit supplying the Islamic republic with U.S.-made aviation equipment. Only aircraft built outside the United States which contain less than 20 per cent U.S.-made components can be sold to Tehran.

British authorities, who backed the British Aerospace deal, are angry at the U.S. move and have complained that Washington approved the sale of 12 Dutch Fokker 100 airliners to Iran last year.

The Dutch aircraft have few U.S.-built components. At least six have been delivered to Iran Air, the Islamic Republic's national carrier.

Flight International, published in London, quoted sources close to the negotiations between British Aerospace and Iran Air as saying the deal involves the purchase of an initial six BAE-146s with options on as many as 50 more.

The magazine said British Aerospace declined comment on the report. But aviation industry sources have been saying for months that the company was negotiating with Tehran on the sale.

Britain restored relations with Iran last September after an 18-month break. The United States broke off relations with Tehran in 1979 and they remain severed.

Flight International quoted a U.S. State Department spokesman as saying that Washington's decision to block the British deal reflected the "deep concern that even after a year of significant changes in the region, Iran has

not ended support for terrorism and the Western hostages have not been released."

"We do not favour normal political, commercial and diplomatic relations with Iran until the hostages are free and it has ended its support for terrorism."

There are 13 Westerners missing in Lebanon and most are believed held by Shiite factions. The missing men comprise six Americans, four Britons, two Germans and an Italian.

The longest held is American Terry Anderson, chief Middle East correspondent for the Associated Press. He was kidnapped in Beirut March 16, 1985.

Under President Hashemi Rafsanjani, the Iranian government has been building bridges with the West and the republic's Arab neighbours to end the country's political isolation.

Mr. Rafsanjani, leader of Iran's so-called pragmatists, has indicated that he wants to end the long-running hostage drama so long with the west can be normalised. But his radical anti-Western rivals in Tehran oppose his policies.

Despite a significant drop in attacks by Iranian-linked Shiite groups over the last two years, Iran remains on the U.S. State Department's list of six states which sponsor "international terrorism." The others are Iraq, Syria, Libya, North Korea and Yemen.

The U.S. block on the British Aerospace deal will be a major blow to Iran Air, which has been seeking to rebuild and expand since the end of the 1980-83 war with Iraq.

It has been opening up new routes to Asia, Africa and Europe and seeks to increase its passenger traffic from five million a year to 8.8 million within five years.

Iran Air currently operates 32 aircraft, including Airbus A300Bs and Boeing 747s and 707D bought before the 1979 Islamic revolution.

Iran Air tried last year to buy five or six Airbus jetliners built by a France-based European consortium. But that deal also fell foul of U.S. authorities because the aircraft's engines are American.

MIDDLE EAST NEWS IN BRIEF

Sodomy convict thrown off cliff in Iran

NICOSIA (AP) — Iran's Revolutionary Guards have executed a 21-year-old man convicted of sodomy and murder by throwing him off a mountain cliff, according to a report that reached Nicosia Monday. The Farsi-language daily, Salaam, reported July 2 that the man, whom it did not identify, had been sentenced to death by the Islamic court in the southeastern Kerman province. The court decreed that he would die the same way he killed his victims. The newspaper, which arrived in Nicosia three weeks late, did not say when the verdict was handed down or the execution took place. It said after sentencing, the convict was taken to a mountain "and pushed off the edge by Revolutionary Guards implementing the court decision." It said the man seized three boys aged 11 to 13 June 21. He sodomised them and then threw them off the Sabebozaman Mountain in Kerman. One of the boys survived the fall to report the incident and press charges, the newspaper said. It did not identify any of the victims by name.

French group determined to monitor Sahara vote

PARIS (R) — A human rights group headed by President Francois Mitterrand's wife is determined to monitor a United Nations referendum next year deciding the future of the Western Sahara despite objections by Morocco's King Hassan. "We intend today to request official permission to go into part of the Sahara which are controlled by Morocco," Frederique Calandra, spokeswoman for Danielle Mitterrand's rights group France Libertes, told Reuters Monday. "Our work will continue," King Hassan described the "vigilance committee" set up by France Libertes as "ridiculous" in an interview shown on French Television Sunday and threatened to refuse it permission to enter Morocco. Next year's U.N. referendum will give the people of the former Spanish colony a choice between integration with Morocco, which controls four-fifths of the disputed territory, or independence as demanded by Polisario guerrillas. Saying it was worried by the presence of large numbers of Moroccan troops in the territory, France Libertes recently set up a committee grouping other French human rights groups to monitor the situation. The committee aims to send an independent observer mission to guarantee a fair vote and collect information about hundreds of Saharans the Polisario says have been detained by Morocco.

U.S., Turkish generals to lead new force

DIYARBAKIR, Turkey (AP) — The U.S. commander of the allied operation that helped repatriate the Iraqi Kurds said Sunday that the force being left behind to ensure their safety would be under joint U.S.-Turkish command, the semi-official Anatolia news agency reported. Lieutenant-General John M. Shaikashvili said the rapid deployment force, based in southeastern Turkey, was currently under the command of his deputy, U.S. air force Major General James Jamerson, who will be joined by a Turkish officer of equal rank who is yet to be named. A U.S.-led allied force, including troops from several European countries, set up a safe haven in northern Iraq to enable the return of some 450,000 Iraqi Kurds who fled to the Turkish border after their failed rebellion in March. Most of the 1.2 million other Kurds who fled to Iran have also returned. Their task complete, the coalition forces which had a peak strength of 22,000, were withdrawn on July 15 from northern Iraq to Turkey. Some of the withdrawn troops are being reorganised into a "quick response" force, expected to be 3,000 strong, which will be based at the Turkish border town of Silopi.

Israelis oppose giving up Golan — poll

The Jerusalem Post

THE PUBLIC is not ready to make territorial concessions on the Golan Heights for peace with Syria, according to a poll conducted by the Smith Research Centre last month.

According to the poll, which asked 1,100 Jews between the ages of 18 and 64, "In order that there be peace with Syria, are you ready for territorial concessions on the Golan Heights?" the responses were as follows:

— Ready to give up all the Golan Heights on condition that there be real peace and security guarantees for Israel: seven per cent.

— Ready to give up part of the Golan Heights on condition that there be real peace and security guarantees for Israel: 28 per cent.

— Today, not ready to make territorial concessions for peace on the Golan Heights: 57 per cent.

— Other, no opinion: eight per cent.

More than 70 per cent of supporters of the right and the religious parties are not ready to make territorial concessions for peace with Syria.

On the left, more than 70 per cent of supporters of the Citizens Rights Movement, Mapam and Shmuel favor giving back at least part of the Golan Heights for peace with Syria, while 54 per cent of Labour backers support the idea.

Nearly two-thirds of Jews originating from Islamic countries — half those with origins in Europe — oppose these territorial concessions, while more than two-thirds of the younger voters (aged 18-29) are opposed.

Hassan II says France should impose quotas on immigrants

PARIS (AP) — Morocco's King Hassan II said Sunday that France should impose quotas on nationality and by profession to limit the number of immigrants from his country and elsewhere.

The king, in a rare hour-long interview with five French journalists, also said France should not try to integrate immigrants into its society, because this would simply increase the flow of arrivals from abroad.

The interview was shown Sunday evening on France's most watched channel, TF1, at a time when immigration has become the number one topic of political debate. An estimated 30 to 40 per cent of France's 5 million immigrants are from Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia.

King Hassan said he disagreed with those in France, including President Francois Mitterrand, who propose that immigrants be given the right to vote in local elections.

Mr. Mitterrand, in a television interview last week, also said he opposed quotas on immigrants. However, his Socialist government, under new Premier Edouard Cresson, has opened up a new offensive aimed at combating the flow of illegal immigrants into France.

King Hassan invited French business executives whose firms were struggling financially to France to relocate in Morocco. He suggested that tax breaks and other incentives could be provided.

King Hassan, interviewed at his palace at Skikaz in Morocco, took a hard line when asked about a jailed political dissident, Abraham Serfaty, who at 63 is believed to be one of the oldest political prisoners in the world.

Iraq on nuclear threshold or not? U.N. experts differ

By Peter James Spielmann
The Associated Press

UNITED NATIONS — Conflicting U.N. reports on whether Iraq could still have a viable atomic weapons programme have undercut U.S. claims that an air strike may be needed to keep Baghdad from producing nuclear weapons.

U.N. inspectors in Iraq told reporters at midweek it looked like Iraq's weapons programme plants were destroyed by allied bombing in the Gulf war and Baghdad had made little or no enriched uranium.

But their bosses at U.N. headquarters in New York said Iraq's previous concealment of its nuclear programme showed it could not be trusted, and there is no way to know yet how much weapons-quality uranium Baghdad possesses.

President George Bush has warned Baghdad that if it does not fully cooperate with the U.N. programme to dismantle Iraq's weapons of mass destruction, he might authorise bombing raids.

Britain and France have backed the threat, joining Washington in giving Baghdad until Thursday to disclose all its nuclear, chemical and biological weapons programmes, and any remaining ballistic missiles.

Last week, Iraqi Foreign Minister Ahmad Hussein Khudayer sent a letter to the United Nations accusing the United States of preparing "a further massive military attack on Iraq," using the nuclear issue as a pretext.

He said Iraq was fully cooperating with U.N. nuclear inspectors, had only a peaceful nuclear programme, and had nothing to hide. And Baghdad found support from an unexpected source — the 37 U.N. nuclear inspectors

in Iraq.

On Wednesday and Thursday, members of the team hailed Iraq's cooperation, said that Baghdad made little or no enriched uranium and said its nuclear programme had been practically wiped out by allied bombing in the Gulf war.

"Most of the destruction was done for us by the allies," said one member of the U.N. team.

"We got a pledge from the (Iraqi) Atomic Energy Commission that nothing else exists that we need to know," said Dimitri Pericco, chief inspector of the team.

He also said reports that Iraq had 40 kilograms of highly enriched uranium were wrong, saying Iraq's claim of having slightly more than half a kilogram of slightly enriched uranium appeared to be closer to the truth.

Officials in the past have said that about 24 kilograms of highly enriched uranium would be needed for a bomb.

But high U.N. officials in New York and Vienna swiftly countered those reports.

In New York, the spokesman for the U.N. Special Commission overseeing the destruction of Iraqi weapons said the U.S. bombing demolished buildings but failed to destroy the machines used to enrich uranium.

The spokesman, Johan Molander, also said it is impossible yet to determine whether Baghdad has secret caches of enriched uranium or other undisclosed nuclear facilities.

Commission members said they had many more sites to check before anyone could say that Iraq's nuclear programme posed no threat.

Noting that Iraq was only elaborating on sites that the inspectors had already discovered, the commission in a statement said it would be "inappropriate to take the government of Iraq's statements at face value."

The head of an independent Washington-based nuclear arms research group said the only way anyone could know how much enriched uranium was produced is by checking the equipment in Iraq.

Measurements on the enrichment machinery would also tell how highly enriched the uranium was, said Gary Milhollin, director of the Wisconsin Project on Nuclear Arms Control. Only highly enriched uranium is suitable for weapons.

In Vienna, the government board of the International Atomic Energy Agency Thursday condemned Iraq for clandestinely producing enriched uranium, the first time that a country had been found in violation of the 1969 Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty.

In Iraq, the inspectors began speaking more cautiously by Friday, noting that they could only vouch for sites they had checked.

One U.S. official at the United Nations noted with pleasure that the "too euphoric" reports from the field had been curbed by the senior officials.

General Colin Powell, U.S. chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, reiterated Saturday that the United States would use force against Iraq again "if necessary."

Defence Secretary Dick Cheney said last week that if Iraq does not provide a full accounting of its nuclear, chemical and biological weapons, "we ... always have the ultimate sanction, military capability."

Afghan rebels claim new battle victory

PESHAWAR (AP) — Guerrillas said they captured a strategic town on the Afghan-Soviet border Sunday, their second major battlefield victory in less than a week.

A spokesman for the guerrilla commanders' supervisory council said the town of Ishkashim in northeastern Badkshan province fell Sunday after five days of fighting.

The spokesman, who spoke on condition of anonymity, said government soldiers and militia offered little resistance and fled across the Amu Darya River to the Soviet Union. He did not know the number of casualties.

Like most claims, the fall of Ishkashim could not be immediately verified independently. The Soviet-backed government in Kabul made no mention of the battle but rarely acknowledges guerrilla victories.

Ishkashim would be the second town in Badkshan to be captured by the Mujahedeen. The town of Zadak fell to the guerrillas Tuesday, opening a critical supply route from Pakistan and setting the stage for a planned attack on the provincial capital Faizabad.

The Mujahedeen have been fighting since April 1978 to topple successive governments in Kabul. Throughout the 13-year-old conflict, the guerrillas have controlled the countryside while the

government held the major cities. In late March, the guerrillas scored their first major victory on the battlefield by capturing the southern garrison town of Khost.

Professing newfound unity, the guerrillas claimed Khost's fall was the first in a series of defeats that would ultimately force Afghan President Najibullah to negotiate an end to the conflict, which has claimed more than 1.5 million lives and forced nearly six million into exile in Pakistan and Iran.

But those plans at times have been stalled by feuds that have divided the seven major rebel parties and by the personal ambitions of their leaders.

The guerrillas have been financed and supported by the United States, Saudi Arabia and Pakistan. They have also received some assistance from other sympathetic Muslim countries such as Libya.

The ruling Watan (Homeland) party, in Afghanistan has been armed by the Soviet Union. For more than nine years, as many as 115,000 Soviet soldiers were deployed in Afghanistan to prop up the government and to help Afghan forces put down the insurgency. But Moscow ended direct involvement in Afghanistan in February 1989, pulling out its troops in line with a U.N.-brokered accord.

Kidnapping
Radical guerrillas may have persuaded a rival pro-Iranian group to kidnap two American relief workers in southern Afghanistan, Western diplomatic sources said.

Diplomats and the more moderate resistance groups have accused Nahazat Islami (Islamic Movement) of kidnapping the pair earlier this month in Ghazni province.

The Islamic Movement has denied responsibility. The small, relatively obscure party was once aligned with the U.S.-supported groups in Pakistan but switched loyalties several years ago to get money and weapons from Tehran.

But Western diplomats, speaking on condition of anonymity, said they had obtained evidence from U.N. workers in Ghazni that proved the Islamic Movement was holding the Americans. They refused to disclose the nature of the evidence.

The U.S. embassy in Islamabad will not release the hostages' names, citing their right to privacy, and said there have been no demands for their release.

The resistance groups loyal to Iran represent the minority Shiites in Afghanistan, while the guerrilla parties based in Pakistan are aligned with the majority Sunni sect.

A group of Shiite Afghans "friendly to America" left Peshawar for Ghazni province over the weekend to try to negotiate the hostages' release, said one diplomatic source.

The two Americans — a veterinarian and a translator — were abducted July 7 while working on an animal husbandry project for the British-based relief agency Global Partners.

Diplomats and other relief agencies said they knew nothing about the agency. Its offices in London and Islamabad did not answer phone calls.

While they believe the pro-Iranian Islamic Movement is holding the Americans, diplomats say they suspect the kidnapping was engineered by fundamentalist Hezb-e-Islami.

A spokesman for Hezb-e-Islami denied the allegation. Hezb-e-Islami is the most anti-American of the seven major groups in Pakistan. Until recently, it received the bulk of the estimated \$2 billion in U.S. military aid provided during the 13-year-old war against government in Kabul.

Despite its anti-U.S. rhetoric, it was considered the most capable militarily.

But Washington started to cut off the weapons pipeline as the group's stand became increasingly anti-American. The rhetoric peaked during the Gulf war when the party's outspoken leader, Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, offered to send his guerrillas to fight Western forces in the region.

JORDAN TIMES DAILY GUIDE AND CALENDAR

JORDAN TELEVISION

Tel: 773111-19

PROGRAMME TWO

18:00 Kilimanjaro Run
18:30 Saisone Cauche
19:00 News in French
19:15 Aujourd'hui on Jordanie
19:30 News in Hebrew
20:00 News in Arabic
20:30 Perfect Strangers
20:55 Muscous in House
21:10 Our Home
21:20 News in English
22:30 Columbo

PRAYER TIMES

04:07 Fajr
05:30 (Sunrise) Duha
12:42 Dhulur
16:23 'Asr
19:46 Maghrib
21:17 'Isha

CHURCHES

St. Mary of Nazareth Church, Swaleh
Tel. 817040.
Assemblies of God Church, Tel.
632785, 685326.
St. Joseph Church Tel. 634590.
Church of the Annunciation Tel.
637440.

De la Salle Church Tel. 661757
Terra Sancta Church Tel. 623666
Church of the Annunciation Tel.
623541
Anglican Church Tel. 625383, Tel.
628543.
Armenian Catholic Church Tel.
71231.
Armenian Orthodox Church Tel.
775261.
St. Ephraim Church Tel. 771751.
Armenian International Church Tel.
683236.
Evangelical Lutheran Church Tel.
811295.
The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-
Day Saints Tel. 823824, 654932.
Church of the Nazarene Tel. 675691

WEATHER

Bulletin supplied by the Department of Meteorology.

A drop in temperatures will take place and winds will be northeasterly moderate to fresh causing dust at times. In Aqaba, winds will be northerly moderate to fresh and seas wavy.

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

AMMAN:
Dr. Yousef Raashed 896301
Dr. Arada Al Ashbal 625507
Dr. Salim Khayyat 791880
Dr. Wael Damani 774800
Firas pharmacy 661912
Ferdows pharmacy 78334
Al Asena pharmacy 623672
Nairokh pharmacy 636705
Al Salami pharmacy 636730
Yacoub pharmacy 644945
Simciani pharmacy 637660

NIGHT DUTY

IBRD:
Dr. Mazen Jourih (—)
Al Shams pharmacy (275825)
ZARQA:
Dr. Tariq Hijazi (—)
Khalifeh pharmacy 98417

EMERGENCIES

Food Control Centre 637111
Civil Defence Department 661111
Civil Defence Immediate Rescue 630341
Civil Defence Emergency 199
Rescue Police 192, 621111, 637777
Fire Brigade 891226
Blood Bank 775121
Highway Police 843402
Traffic Police 896390
Public Security Department 63021
Hotel Complaints 698800
Price Complaints 661776
Water and Sewerage Complaints 877467
Arman Municipality 877467
Telephone Information (directory assistance) 121
Overseas Calls 010230
Central Amman Telephone Repairs 623101
Abdall Telephone Repairs 661101
Jordan Television 731111
Radio Jordan 774111
Water Authority 680100
Jordan Electricity Authority 815615
Electric Power

YESTERDAY'S HIGH TEMPERATURES

Amman 30, Aqaba 39, Humidity readings: Amman 58 per cent, Aqaba 50 per cent.

COMPANY

RJ Flight Information 08-53200
Queen Alia Intl. Airport 08-53200

HOSPITALS

AMMAN:
Hussein Medical Centre 813813/32
Khaldi Maternity, J. Amn 642816
Al-Balqa Maternity, J. Amn 643412
Jabal Amman Maternity 623640
Malbas, J. Amman 636140
Palestine, Shmeisani 6641714
Shmeisani Hospital 669131
University Hospital 89646
Al-Musheir Hospital 667270
The Islamic, Abdali 666127/37
Al-Ahli, Abdali 6641646
Ishtam, Al-Mubashrah 771013
Al-Bashir, J. Ashrafieh 771112
Army, Marfa 891611/15
Queen Alia Hospital 6624050
ZARQA:
Zarqa Govt. Hospital (09)983323
Zarqa National Hospital (09)90560
Ibn Sina Hospital (09)986732
IBRD:
Princess Basma Hospital (02)275555
Greek Catholic Hospital (02)27275
Ibn Al Nafies Hospital (02)247100

FOR THE TRAVELLER

QUEEN ALIA INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT
This information is supplied by Royal Jordanian (RJ) Information Department at the Queen Alia International Airport Tel

Crown Prince and other officials meet OIC chief

AMMAN (Petra) — His Royal Highness, Crown Prince Hassan Monday received the secretary general of the Organisation of the Islamic Conference (OIC) Hamid Al-Gabid.

Prince Hassan stressed in the meeting the importance of Islamic dialogue and the need to achieve active solidarity among Muslim nations in a manner that will serve the interests of all Arabs and Muslims.

Prince Hassan and Dr. Gabid discussed the role of the OIC in the convergence of views among the organisation's member states. Dr. Gabid was earlier received by Prime Minister Taher Masri.

Both meetings were attended by Foreign Minister Abdullah Ensour, who also held talks with Dr. Gabid.

Dr. Ensour and the OIC chief discussed issues of concern to the Islamic world, particularly the Palestinian cause and the situation in the region as well as the role of the OIC in enhancing joint Islamic action and promoting cooperation among the organisation's member states.

Dr. Gabid left Amman for Damascus Monday evening, ending a two-day official visit. In a statement to the Jordan News Agency, Petra, Dr. Gabid expressed satisfaction with the outcome of his talks with His

Majesty King Hussein, the Crown Prince, Mr. Masri, Dr. Ensour and the speakers of the Lower and Upper Houses of Parliament. He described his talks in Amman as "frank, constructive and useful."

He said King Hussein and the Jordanian officials he met stressed their support to the OIC until it achieves its legitimate aspirations, particularly resolving the Palestinian problem.

Dr. Gabid said King Hussein responded positively to the OIC's efforts aiming at building bridges of confidence and uniting the ranks among Islamic states.

Officials in Jordan, he said, had affirmed their support to the OIC's future conferences, including the Islamic Conference of the members states' ministers of foreign affairs to be held in Istanbul Aug. 3 and the Islamic states summit to be held in Senegal later this year.

"The Jordanian officials voiced their hope that those two conferences will be a good venue for holding dialogue and that they would form a new starting point for joint Islamic action," he said.

Dr. Gabid called on all OIC member states to help the organisation in its reconciliatory efforts and to provide all the facilities to it to enable it to achieve its message in serving Islam and Muslims.



SECRETARY DAY — Hotel Jordan Intercontinental held its annual Secretaries Day Sunday to honour secretaries working for a number of private and public organisations. The secretaries were treated to a lunch at

the hotel's swimming pool that was attended by businessmen, journalists and prominent officials. Hotel Manager Majeed Khalil welcomed the guests and distributed awards to a group of secretaries.

Jordan to propose establishment of a pan-Arab youth commission

AMMAN (Petra) — Jordan's delegation to the Arab Ministers of Youth meeting due to open in Cairo Wednesday plans to submit a working paper calling for the creation of a pan-Arab youth commission to be charged with the task of supporting national teams, establishing sports installations and facilities and taking other measures designed to promote youth and sports activities in the Arab World.

The announcement was made by Minister of Youth Saleh Irshaidat shortly before his departure for the Cairo meetings Monday at the head of an official Jordanian delegation.

The conference will address the basic task of reshaping inter-Arab relations in youth and sports fields with a view to directing them in a manner that would reflect most positively on the Arab World's youth and sports activities, the minister said in a statement.

During the three-day meetings a number of topics will be discussed, including the formation of an

inter-Arab Youth Federation and the coming pan-Arab sports activities.

The establishment of a special fund in finance youth and sports installations and ways to stimulate sports events in the Arab World are also on the agenda, the minister said.

Dr. Irshaidat, who is accompanied by a five member team from his ministry, said that he will discuss ways to increase exchanges of youth and sports expertise among Arab countries.

PSD foils another drug smuggling attempt

AMMAN (J.T.) — For the second time in as many months, the Public Security Department (PSD) announced that its border police have foiled a series of drug trafficking attempts across the border with Jordan's neighbours.

A PSD spokesman was quoted by the Jordan News Agency, Petra, as saying that border police units foiled attempts to smuggle 335 kilograms of hashish. The haul was on its way into the Kingdom from a neighbouring Arab state, the spokesman said. He did not disclose the country the hashish was coming from.

Border units backed by police helicopters foiled a major drug trafficking operation last month, seizing 800 kilograms of hashish and arresting the smugglers. PSD Director Fadel Ali said his units were trying to combat drug trafficking by all means at their disposal.

Major General Ali paid tribute to the PSD units for their efforts in combating smuggling in general and drug trafficking in particular.

Last year, the PSD said 135 drug trafficking cases were recorded and 342 persons involved in the operations were arrested. In the first six months of 1991, a total of 80 cases have been handled, with the police arresting 80 people involved in the illicit business, Maj-Gen. Ali.

Officials close to final decision on establishing glass company in Jordan

By P.V. Vivekanand
Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — The Jordao Glass Industries Company (JGIC) has shortlisted four offers from foreign firms to establish a plant to manufacture glass bottles and domestic utensils and is expected to finalise its plans in two weeks' time.

Farhi Oheid, chairman of the company, said three of the offers were strictly technical while the fourth included a proposal for the supplier of equipment to take a 50 per cent equity in the project.

"We are continuing discussions with the various parties, including some of our potential consumers in Jordan, and we hope to come up with a final decision in two weeks," Mr. Oheid told the Jordan Times.

JGIC will present its proposals to Yemenis, with whom it has been involved in discussions to set up a joint venture glass plant, and it is possible that part of the proposed production facility would be set up in Yemen, Mr. Oheid said.

"If (the Yemenis) are interested in the proposal, they will be welcome to come in," he said. "If not, we are going ahead on our own since we are convinced that there is an urgent need for a plant to produce glass bottles and

utensils in Jordan."

Mr. Oheid said that the idea of such a plant was contemplated in the mid-80s but was shelved in 1985 because of financial problems.

"But the idea was revived in 1989 in view of the (decline) in the value of the dinar and the rising prices of aluminium — which have gone up by three times — as an alternative to glass," he said.

Mr. Oheid declined to reveal the estimated cost of the project but said initial plans call for a production capacity of 20,000 tonnes with an annual output of 15,000 tonnes of bottles for soft drinks, pharmaceuticals, household utensils and containers for cosmetics.

Close to 80 per cent of the raw materials will come from Jordan, he said. Silicate, the main component in the glass industry, is available in Jordan in abundance. The plant's requirements of sodium carbonate are also expected to be satisfied locally.

Noting that the JGIC has ample experience in production, Mr. Oheid said: "We have the raw materials, we have the expertise and we have the personnel."

The new plant is expected to create employment opportunities for 150 to 200 graduates of technical schools, he said.

and the injustice lying in the distribution of the Arab and Muslim wealth.

The war, Mr. Gbuwell said, has uncovered the determination of certain powers not to allow the Arabs and Muslims to free themselves from an unjust world order.

Another paper on the role of the media in the Gulf war was presented by the assistant secretary general of the International Islamic Popular Leadership Organisation, Ibrahim Al Ghuwell of Libya, said the Gulf war revealed the tampering with Arab wealth

of the media to propagate the image they want to themselves to gain internal and external support.

A third paper presented by Lower House of Parliament member Laith Shubeilat said the Gulf war "was a difficult test to the regimes, public institutions and the individual."

Mr. Shubeilat said the war revealed the shameful situation of the public institutions in the Arab World and the variation in public opinion from one Arab state to another.

NAF flooded with economic aid requests as conditions of poor families in Kingdom worsens

AMMAN (J.T.) — The National Aid Fund (NAF), which offers assistance to the needy in Jordan, has lately been receiving huge numbers of applications for assistance by poor families in the Kingdom, according to NAF Director General Farouk Badran.

The sharp increase in the number of poor families requesting aid is largely due to the difficult economic circumstances prevailing in Jordan, said Mr. Badran in a statement during a meeting with Minister of Social Development Awni Al Basbir and other officials.

Dr. Bashir said his ministry

plans to encourage the work of the General Union of Voluntary Societies (GUVS), which also offers assistance to the poor and runs vocational training centres for the handicapped, and will give more attention to the needy people in various settlements in the provinces.

The minister, who was chairing a meeting for the directors of the ministry's departments in various governorates, said that the director's views were of paramount importance to him as they provide valuable information about the situation in various regions.

What GUVS is doing is of great significance to Jordanian society because its activities benefit the poor and the needy, the minister said.

A sum of JD 40 is given to each needy family every month from the NAF. The fund also offers lump sums to poor families who suddenly lose their main wage earners and also offer loans to heads of poor families opening a business in order to become self-supportive.

The NAF draws its funds from the treasury and contributions to finance its projects.

Education minister severely criticises private school practices

AMMAN (J.T.) — Minister of Education Eid Dahiyat has stressed the need for raising the standard of teachers in private schools and granting them full rights like their colleagues in the government schools.

Should these teachers be deprived of their rights, their performance at schools would be adversely affected, he said.

The minister was addressing a meeting by directors of various private schools in the Amman region gathered at the Princess Alia School for Girls.

The process of providing the teachers with proper qualifications is of paramount importance and cooperation and coordination among the private schools and the Ministry of Education is essential, the minister said.

In his address, the minister reviewed a number of excesses by private schools, especially in matters related to school fees, extra fees exacted from students during the school year, charges for foreign books, special uniforms for trips and ceremonies.

Such a behaviour affects the family budgets and can only deflect the school from its original mission of education, the minister said.

Numerous columnists in the local press have been writing about the complaints of parents whose sons and daughters get education at private schools in Amman. The complaints mostly focus on the question of excessive fees such schools charge and which continue to increase every

year. Dr. Dahiyat said that a number of private schools tend to impose severe pressure on teachers working for them such as delaying the payment of their salaries during the summer vacation or increasing their volume of work.

The minister accused some of the schools of deviating from the educational purpose for which they had been established, especially in matters such as controlling students attendance and the length of the school period.

Discussion at the meeting covered the general conditions of the teachers in private schools. The minister promised that private school teachers would be covered by the ministry's on-the-job-training programme.

Ajloun mukhtars meet PSD officials, discuss gun firings during weddings

By Elia Nasrallah
Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — Village headmen (mukhtars) in the Ajloun District had a meeting in Amman Monday with the Public Security Department (PSD) Director Fadel Ali and senior officers to discuss security and peace in their region following incidents during which weapons were fired heavily in area towns and villages.

The Jordan News Agency, Petra, said the PSD chief and the mukhtars discussed cooperation to ensure continued security and stability in the region of Ajloun in the north of Jordan.

Petra quoted the mukhtars as paying tribute to the PSD for its services to citizens in the Ajloun District and in stemming what they called harmful habits which normally result in misfortunes. For example, firing of arms during weddings and in rejoicings over other events and occasions is strictly banned in Jordao due to the heavy loss of life — resulting from this tradition.

PSD records show that 312 cases for gunfire occurred in 1990,

while 224 such cases were reported in 1989, accounting for the death of 27 people and the injury of 211 others. According to these records, 84 of the cases occurred during weddings.

Reports in the daily press said that nine mukhtars in the Ajloun district were imprisoned for one night earlier this month at the local police station for their failure to reveal the names of those who fired arms during weddings and other occasions, this summer, including the announcement of the new government of Prime Minister Taher Masri.

According to these reports, the mukhtars refused to comply, saying only that it was not their duty to do that. Sources told the Jordan Times that the mukhtars complained to Minister of Interior Jawdat Esboul about their detention and submitted their resignations, only to withdraw them later after the intervention of concerned government department and prominent personalities.

The case of the nine mukhtars was raised by three deputies from the northern constituencies in their addresses to Parliament last

week just before the vote of confidence in the government was taken.

The deputies urged the government to find a solution to the problem of the firing of arms other than detaining village headmen.

The mukhtars were held responsible by the police for any firing during weddings and other events in their district and were told to prevent this bad habit, but firing continued, according to the reports.

Informed sources told the Jordan Times Monday that the police are now demanding that all printing presses around the Kingdom provided the police with a copy of invitation cards for weddings so that the bridegroom can be called in and warned that legal measures against him and his family would be taken should firing occur during the wedding.

The sources said that the police opted for this measure as an alternative to detaining the mukhtars and in the wake of press reports, comments by columnists and the deputies' speeches in Parliament.

Investors flood industrial cities

AMMAN (J.T.) — The Sahab Industrial City near Amman and the Al Hassan Industrial City in Irbid are witnessing a growing demand by investors seeking to establish new industrial projects after a break of several months of stagnation because of the Gulf crisis, according to the director general of the Jordan Industrial Estates Corporation (JIEC), Dr. Faysal Al Suheimat.

In a statement to the Jordan News Agency, Petra, Dr. Suheimat said that his office has been receiving a flood of applications from investors seeking ventures. Many of them are Jordanian and Palestinian expatriates who have left the Gulf region in the wake of the Gulf crisis.

Dr. Suheimat attributed the increase in the number of investors to the fact that the returning expatriates wish to place their money in "good investments" for which there are good revenues from exports and wish to benefit from the many incentives and facilities offered them by the JIEC at the two industrial cities.

Dr. Suheimat said that during 1991 a total of 25 new industrial companies were established so far at Sahab Industrial City with a total capital of JD 13 million. The new projects, he said, created jobs for 600 people.

According to Dr. Suheimat, the Sahab Industrial City now encompasses 213 industrial projects with an estimated total investment of JD 117 million. The new investments, he said, are in

projects for the production of electrical appliances, home appliances, sanitary products, computer paper rolls, plastic pipes, metal, food and textile products.

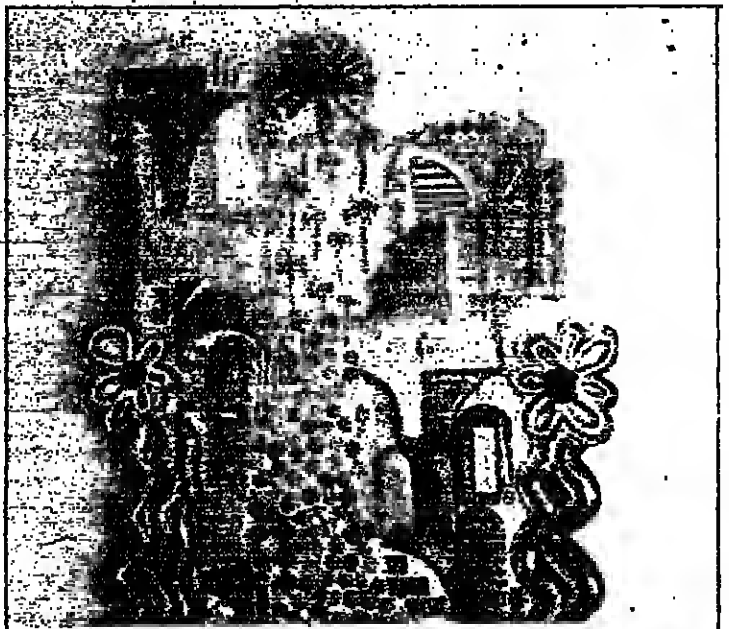
Last February, in the wake of the Gulf war, the JIEC said that the crisis had frozen all applications and inhibited investors. Some officials put the Sahab Industrial City's losses due to a halt in exports at JD 100 million.

Dr. Suheimat told Petra that the Sahab Industrial City's buildings have all been rented and used by industrial investors, but the JIEC was setting up new spaces and factories on different areas to be leased or sold to investors.

Referring to the Al Hassan Industrial City of Irbid, Dr. Suheimat said that during 1991 four new industrial investment projects had been started in the city to produce processed food, detergent and other products. He estimated the total amount of capital invested at JD 800,000.

According to Dr. Suheimat, there are a total of seven industrial projects in the Al Hassan Industrial City with a total capital of JD 2 million, creating jobs for 300 workers. The JIEC, he said, has provided the necessary infrastructure, thus paving the ground for industries to commence production within a short time.

The Al Hassan Industrial City in Irbid was built recently on 42 dunums of land and has facilities for 80 factories and other businesses.



JERASH EXHIBIT — Under the sponsorship of the Jerash Festival, two artists, an Iraqi and a Jordanian, hold a ceramic exhibition at the Royal Cultural Centre. To the observant eye, the exhibition promotes two different styles. One is attributed to the Iraqi artist S. Saadi, distinguished for its unusual mural form of the ceramic expression and the strong colours given in the predominant shades of green and blue. Contrasting, H. Zabi's approach is classical. His exhibits are a variety of different forms of vases, plates, dishes and amphoras in subdued colours which give out a feeling of calmness and elegance.

WHAT'S GOING ON EXHIBITIONS

- ★ Plastic art exhibition by Iraqi artists Batool Al Fuksiki, Ibrahim Al Abdali and Abdol Jabbar Salman at the Royal Cultural Centre.
- ★ Traditional embroidery exhibition at the Royal Cultural Centre.
- ★ Plastic art exhibition by Nidal Jamous and Ahmad Hanandeh at Yarmouk University.
- ★ Exhibition of photos depicting the Palestinian people's suffering under Israeli occupation at Yarmouk University.
- ★ Ceramics exhibition by Hazem Al Zabi and Sibham Al Saadi at the Royal Cultural Centre.

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Terrified of peace

PUBLIC OPINION polls are a funny thing. At best they are not indicative of the real feelings of the public, but rather a reflection of what the establishment, and especially the media, feed people with. The Israeli newspaper, the Jerusalem Post, yesterday ran the results of an opinion poll on Israelis' response to giving up the Golan Heights back to Syria in exchange for peace. According to the Post, the poll was conducted last month!

Asked if they were ready to give up the occupied Golan Heights "on condition that there is real peace and security guarantees for Israel," seven per cent of the Israelis said yes and 57 per cent said no. Those ready to give up part of the area for peace amounted to 26 per cent while those who had no opinion were eight per cent. Among religious parties, the rejectionists stood at 70 per cent.

Although the Gulf war demonstrated, in the opinion of U.S. leaders, that with missiles there are no secure borders, the Israeli establishment has for more than two decades now justified its "annexation" of the Golan Heights with security reasons. Unlike the West Bank and Gaza, where Israel claims "God-given rights," the Golan Heights were portrayed by the Israeli establishment as being vital to the "security" of the Jewish state. This has been the line of both Israel's right and left. We are not, therefore, surprised at the results of the poll. The Israeli public, like their patrons in the U.S., are being brain-washed by their militant leaders into believing that only more Arab territory will guarantee their security. Would they occupy Iraq and Algeria when missiles are launched from that far to feel secure in what they claim is their "promised land"? With leaders like Ariel Sharon and Yitzhak Shamir, shall we expect a softer line from the Likud? Of course we do not. Soon the Jerusalem Post will come out with a similar poll over the fate of the West Bank and Gaza and we will not be surprised by the results. If the top leadership of Israel is adamant on its hold on the occupied territories, we will surely see an increased tilt towards more Israeli public intransigence. If anything, the poll clearly demonstrates that Israel, led by Mr. Shamir and Mr. Sharon, is not ready for peace. On the contrary, the poll provides ample proof that Israel not only does not want peace but is absolutely terrified of such a thought. And the longer they persist in their path, the sooner the region will explode into war and turmoil. And Israel will find once more that land does not guarantee security. Security can only be guaranteed by the goodwill of people, and especially those who lead them.

ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

The United States' current drive to bring about peace to the Middle East region is a golden opportunity for Washington to prove its credibility and prove wrong the Arab countries' belief that the U.S. administration is adopting a double standard and constantly deceiving the Arabs, said Al Ra'i Arabia daily Monday. The paper said that the Arabs would like to be optimistic and hopeful about the U.S. moves, but they would also like to reaffirm their optimism with concrete results. The U.S. moves come close on the heels of a U.S.-led aggression on the Iraqi people and amidst continued threats to Iraq and constant U.S. support for the Israeli authorities to maintain their hold over the occupied Arab territories, the paper noted. But still the Arabs can be proved wrong in their belief that the U.S. is adopting a double criteria if the United States is genuinely working towards establishing peace based on justice and the international legitimacy. The paper said that the United States can uphold the U.N. Security Council resolutions and the international legitimacy and pressure Israel into succumbing to the world community's will and give up the occupied lands in exchange for peace. Unless the U.S. administration does something concrete in this respect and unless peace based on justice is achieved, the Middle East region is bound to remain prone to further violence and upheavals, endangering world peace the paper warned. It said that the present chance is for Washington to pressure and not to support Israel so that peace can be achieved.

Tackling the same topic, Sawt Al Shaab daily said that the Arabs have now offered every possible concession to the Israelis for the sake of achieving a just peace based on international legitimacy and for the implementation of U.N. Security Council resolutions 242 and 338. The paper said that the Arabs have accepted an end to the boycott of Israeli goods, if Israel agrees to stop building settlements on occupied Arab land. In the light of the five visits to the region by the U.S. Secretary of State James Baker, the U.S. administration and the whole world must know by now that it is Israel which is intransigent and that the Shamir government is not showing any cooperation with the U.S. or the U.N. in order to help the establishment of peace, said the paper. Mr. Baker himself has praised Jordan, Egypt and Syria for their cooperation and said that their attitude was very encouraging and conducive to peace, unlike Israel's stand, the paper noted. It said that Mr. Baker's mission in Israel is the most difficult one in view of Israel's obstinate stand and it is hoped that the U.S. will do all it can to see the international legitimacy implemented and not to lose this opportunity of achieving peace between Israel and its neighbours.

The crisis in Algeria: what chance democracy?

By Tom Porteous

THERE are no easy ways out of Algeria's present impasse — the result of the collapse of the old system and the inability of the regime to introduce a new one which does not carry the long-term risk of transferring power from the political elite to Muslim fundamentalists. Behind this crisis lie economic and social problems to which there are no obvious solutions, a political infrastructure rotten to its roots and an acute crisis of cultural identity in a fast changing world.

Who holds power in Algeria? Who is going to hold it in six weeks' or in six months' time? President Chadli may still be at the helm, but the rudder has come adrift. The regime's main ballast and only remaining source of legitimacy is the democratic process launched by the president in the wake of the riots of October 1988. But this process is now seriously endangered, to say the least. And the fundamentalists have moved swiftly to exploit this situation, demonstrating not only their own strength on the streets, but also that — until genuinely free elections can be held — the army is the only prop to a totally discredited regime and perhaps the only obstacle to the establishment of an Islamic state. Hence the importance of the question of the army's loyalty to the regime.

The regime's haphazard reaction

Desperate to hold onto its economic and political privileges, the regime has reacted to the crisis in a haphazard and contradictory fashion. The "reformist" government of Mouloud Hamrouche was quickly sacrificed to the fundamentalists after the first outbreak of violence in early June. Mr. Hamrouche was supported by the French, but accused by

many within his party of having "sold out" economically to the West and of having rigged the election laws and lists in order to fill the National Assembly with his own clients. The manner of the removal of Mr. Hamrouche and his clan from power bore all the marks of a mini-coup within the regime supported by the military. This impression was reinforced by the declaration of a state of siege and the appearance of the army on the streets in force to impose order and suppress the fundamentalists. At the same time there were reports of negotiations between conservatives in the regime and the FIS leadership. These reports led some liberals in the secular opposition to speculate that conservatives and fundamentalists could be plotting to overturn the democratic process and share power between them.

However the appointment of a fairly neutral prime minister, Sid Ahmed Ghozali, to form a "non-partisan" government, and the resignation of Mr. Chadli from the head of the National Liberation Front (FLN), did seem to indicate a recognition somewhere in the leadership that the democratic process was vital to the stability of the country and the legitimacy of the regime. Mr. Chadli's departure from the party leadership and the formation of Algeria's first non-FLN government since 1962 could herald the dismemberment of the party which has served as the power base of successive Algerian regimes, but which is now riven by internal factions and fully discredited by corruption and failure. In any case these moves complete the break with the past.

Obviously, Mr. Ghozali's government of technocrats and the new look president "of all Algerians" have the difficult task of restoring order, fixing a new date for elections and keeping the

floundering economy afloat until an elected government can take over. But the new government also looks very much like a facade to gloss over the fairly brutal suppression of the FIS with which the regime hopes to force its way out of the present political impasse.

The regime's management of the crisis may be sufficient to maintain a fragile social peace in Algeria. But for how long? The regime has shown it is ready to use force and has arrested thousands of fundamentalist militants, including the movement's leaders, in an effort to break its back. But the FIS too is becoming more assertive and confident in its strategy of increasing and reducing the tension on the streets to suit its political aims. And while the regime's options are limited and it has to act quickly to restore durable stability, the FIS has plenty of room for manoeuvre, nothing to lose from the present instability and time very much on its side.

Social and economic crises

The social and economic crisis which explains much of the popularity of the fundamentalist movement shows every sign of worsening in the short term at least, with Algeria unable to exploit its considerable mineral, agricultural and human potential to the full. The country is caught up in a spiral of decline all too familiar in the Third World; partly the result of the corruption, incompetence and mismanagement engendered by three decades of one-party rule, partly the result of the policies of the industrialised nations which each year take 75 per cent of Algeria's export earnings as service payments on a \$25 billion debt. The principle victims of this combination are a huge mass of young, unemployed and frustrated Alge-

rians. Seventy-five per cent of Algerians are under 30, 70 per cent of the active work force under 30 are unemployed. Reforms, demanded by foreign creditors as conditions for further loans needed to create new jobs, have led to price rises this year ranging from between 30 and 400 per cent. Over the past few years there have been drastic cuts in per capita spending on health, education and housing. All this in a country where socialism raised (and for a period fulfilled) high expectations among the population.

The Islamic Salvation Front has exploited the growing reservoir of discontent and frustration in Algeria not by offering any coherent or convincing solutions to the country's material problems (the FIS' programme, drawn literally from sacred Islamic texts 14 centuries old, propose no credible solutions), but by its emotional appeal on behalf of an Islamic identity which is seen as threatened by the aggressive cultural, economic and political superiority of the West. More effectively than any other political movement in Algeria's new pluralism, the FIS has defined and responded to this profound crisis of identity, the product of 130 years of French colonialism, almost 30 years of totalitarian rule and an overall failure to come to terms with an imported, but nonetheless inevitable, modernity which is fast destroying traditional values without installing any new ones in their place.

Since the FIS proved the broad popularity of its appeal by sweeping to power in most local governments at municipal elections a year ago, the party's incompetent and corrupt management of local affairs has alienated a fair number of its supporters. But there is little evidence to suggest, as the media have done, that the FIS has also lost out from the latest

violence. On the contrary it may have recouped some of its lost ground, because it is seen by many as the victim of the heavy-handed and repressive tactics of the regime. Although it is said that the FIS has lost the support of Saudi Arabia since it sided with Iraq in the Gulf war, it still probably gets funds from private Saudi benefactors and now has considerable backing from local businessmen who out of faith or opportunism are putting their money — or some of it — on an Islamic future. With many signs pointing to an all out confrontation between the FIS and the regime, an important unknown in the band of the FIS is how much support it enjoys in the army.

The opposition's weaknesses

The FIS has cleverly exploited not only the weaknesses of the regime, but also those of the rest of the opposition, a medley of so called "democratic" parties ranging from "moderate Islamists" to "Trotskyist." The strongest of these are the liberal centrist RCD and Hocine Ait Ahmed's FFS, but like the rest, they are badly organised, ill-financed, ill-profiled and incapable of forming a common front. In spite of their common purpose of opposing both the FIS and the regime, the FFS and the RCD both enjoy solid support among the Berber minority, but this has also hindered them in presenting themselves as national parties. Worse, in their fear of the FIS and the prospect of an Islamic state, they have shown themselves prepared not to ask too many embarrassing questions about the regime's suppression of the fundamentalists. This is seen by many Algerians as a vindication of the FIS' claims that they are aligned closely behind the odd regime and that their secular and democratic positions and

programmes are anti-Islamic. Western oriented imports. Part of the FIS strategy has been to discredit the very concept of democracy as something alien and unsuitable to Algeria, and this cleavage between the Islamists and the democrats is potentially one of the most explosive ingredients of the present crisis — especially if it becomes superimposed on ethnic divisions between Arabs and Berbers.

Mr. Ait Ahmed claims that a silent majority of Algerians are fed up with both the regime and the FIS and are just waiting to express this in general elections by voting for his FFS. True or not, liberal democrats like Mr. Ait Ahmed have the disadvantage of being excluded from the political process in the coming crucial months, and may well have to wait for a long time for genuinely free elections.

Although the regime remains under considerable pressure to stick to the democratic option, it is difficult to see how it can hold credible elections that will satisfy the country and restore durable social peace after the hard-line clamp-down on the fundamentalists which is now under way. With its leaders incarcerated and its headquarters occupied by the security forces, the FIS is temporarily inconvenienced. But with its popularity intact and its image as the only effective opposition to the bad and faltering old regime strengthened, the FIS remains the enfant terrible of Algeria. And if it is not permitted to test its popularity at the polls, it is clearly ready to try its luck at the barricades — a move which could quickly bring on a civil war, or both. Algeria looks as though it is losing its grip on the only peaceful solution to the crisis: democracy — Middle East International, London.

This is not hell

By Dr. John Habgood

The following article, by the Archbishop of York, is reprinted from The Independent.

HELL is full of surprises. I am not just thinking of the surprise of the goats in Matthew 25 v44, wondering what they had done to deserve their separation from the sheep and consignment to eternal fire. The surprises I have in mind spring from a more mundane judgement, in fact from judgement on a modest essay on Hell I wrote last month for my diocesan newspaper.

A correspondent had asked me for an article because one of the damaging experiences of his youth had been the teaching of the sect to which he then belonged, that "eternal conscious punishment was for all unbelievers." Subsequently I had an even more powerful letter from a mother whose distressed daughter-in-law had been told by her clergyman that her stillborn child must inevitably go to Hell for eternity because it was unhap- pised. How such teaching could possibly be compatible with belief in the love of God, and how the idea of eternal punishment unrelieved by any change of mind could possibly be conceived as just, are questions which demand an answer, no matter how strongly some passages of Scripture speak of an eternal divide between the saved and the lost.

As the churches put evangelism higher on their agendas, there is also a need to think more clearly about the motive for it. Do present-day Christians really believe, as many of our forebears undoubtedly did, that all unevangelised souls go straight to Hell? Or is it more true to say that goodness forced on people under threat of torture is not goodness at all? That the motive for evangelism must be love not fear?

In my essay I also referred to the familiar point that some of the more lurid descriptions of burning fires and undying worms in the New Testament were imagery, now known to refer to the Jerusalem rubbish dump (Gehenna), and were not to be taken literally. Traditional pictures of Hell owe more to mistranslations, to later interpretations, to medieval excesses, to poets such as Dante and Milton, and above all to the failure to grasp the full implications of salvation, than to the original Scriptures and to early Christian teaching.

But I was careful to point out that to criticise the idea of Hell on ethical grounds, and to re-interpret New Testament symbolism, is not in any way to abandon the belief that actions can have eternal consequences. In fact Hell is a profound symbol of the seriousness of moral choices, and of the irreducible character of human freedom.

One way of reconciling these opposites is to say that we create Hell for ourselves. It is not an

objective reality, not a place or state created by God as a means of executing his justice, but is the way we experience self-absorption, despair, and unwillingness to open ourselves to His love. Heaven, by contrast, is not self-created but is the God-given fulfilment of all His intentions for us. There is therefore a real lostness from which we need to be rescued. But it is not a lostness imposed upon us by God as a punishment, and therefore raises no question about God's moral goodness or His love towards us. I had thought that these were present-day theological platitudes. Hence the surprise when sections of the media went berserk. Everybody wanted interviews. I was even invited to appear on Newsnight.

"Traditional pictures of Hell owe more to mistranslations, to later interpretations, to medieval excesses, to poets such as Dante and Milton, and above all to the failure to grasp the full implications of salvation, than to the original Scriptures and to early Christian teaching."

The Daily Telegraph claimed that its readers had a particular interest in Hell, and then produced both a leading article and an item in its gossip column. The editorial contained a curious reference to the idea of a "physical hell," thereby subscribing to the double error of supposing that anything that is not physical is not objective, and anything that is not objective is not real. For all its pious tone it was peddling old-fashioned materialism.

The Yorkshire Post fell into the same trap the other way round, in supposing that if Hell is self-created it must be "all in the mind," and to that extent unreal and insignificant. Both showed an alarming capacity to handle the notions of spiritual reality, the inner reality of persons, and by implication the reality of God. Part of the evangelistic task of Christians, therefore, must be to rehabilitate the language in which such matters may be sensibly discussed.

A small army of correspondents divided themselves between appreciation and denunciation, some of the latter showing a particular interest in my own ultimate fate. Critics on the whole were content to quote a few predictable texts from the Bible as if these settled the matter. Most seemed unaware that, even if one takes every word of the Bible at its face value, there is

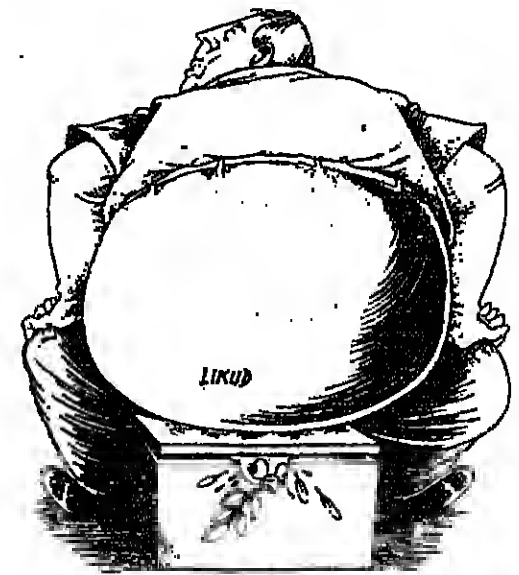
still theological work to be done in translating the wide variety of Biblical teaching into comprehensible and consistent doctrines. Too many people seem stuck with a stark either/or alternative — between either simply repeating Biblical phrases as if these answered all the questions or creating one's own belief more-or-less regardless of the Bible. Letter after letter that comes through my post simply assumes that these are the alternatives. Somehow we need to escape from this kind of sterile confrontation, whether between fundamentalists and liberals, self-styled "Biblical Christians" or "non-Biblical Christians" — whatever they might be — and acknowledge that we are all trying to take the Bible seriously.

One of the difficulties in interpreting the Bible lies in the fact that different bits of it say different things. Hell is a good example. There are undoubtedly some very direct and terrifying statements. But there are also plenty of passages with a picture of the end as a gathering up of the whole created order in Christ. Furthermore there are insights into the nature of God derived from the whole story to Christ's death and resurrection and the promise of forgiveness — insights which seem to make the idea of everlasting punishment incompatible with the main thrust of the gospel. The Biblical interpreter has to make sense of all this and more, not because he or she is liberal or conservative, modern or traditionalist but because the questions are there in the Bible itself.

The violence, not to say the virulence, of the things some people say about Hell points to a strong desire to punish and reject. A.N. Wilson in his much-publicised conversion away from Christianity seems to have discovered — rather late — that religion can be dangerous. It can arouse some quite ugly passions. And sometimes the more deeply people feel themselves to be committed, the more ready they are to exclude and condemn those who fail to measure up to their own way of seeing things. Talk of Hell can touch the hellish impulses inside each of us. All of which is another reason for trying to look coolly at what it means.

This is even more important at a time when the upsurge of traditionalist religion can threaten to bring back unwelcome fears and hatreds alongside more desirable influences. There is a proper fear of God, a proper awe in the face of His holiness.

We need to recognise the dangers of self-centredness, faithlessness and despair. But the paralysing fear of punishment, which dogged some earlier Christians, has, I believe, no place in the Christian gospel. James Joyce, in revelling as a young man against the famous Jesuit sermon on the terrors of a physical Hell, was surely wiser than his teachers.



M. Kahil

Rough, tough justice in Israel for Palestinians

By Jack Redden
Reuters

GAZA — Ibrahim Sharif ignored the judge's advice to plead guilty and accept a sentence of 14 months.

From the dock of an Israeli military court, the Palestinian youth protested that his confession was made under torture.

Defying a warning that false testimony carried a seven-year sentence, Mr. Sharif tried to speak again but was cut off.

In a few minutes the trial was over.

"You wasted court time and didn't take the opportunity given to you," the judge said, and sentenced Mr. Sharif to 21 months for standing watch while other youths wrote graffiti.

Another 27 months was suspended — Mr. Sharif will have to serve it if he is arrested again. There was nothing unusual about Mr. Sharif's trial, except his brief resistance. The central Gaza courts had dealt with 170 cases the day before.

More than 80,000 Palestinians have been arrested since their revolt against the Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip erupted in 1987. In mid-July, the army reported that it held more than 9,000 prisoners, a third of them awaiting trial.

"There is no question the system is not swamped the way it was in the early days of the intifada," said an Israeli officer. "The courts adjusted."

The system does process prisoners faster than it once did. And the courts are less crowded in the West Bank than in teeming Gaza. But the military system in force since Israel's victory in the 1967 Middle East war is a long way from justice seen in the west or even inside Israel.

One Israeli officer prosecutes, another sits as judge. Usually the only "witness" is an interrogator

who says the defendant confessed. Israeli Druze Arab conscripts give a haphazard translation, omitting chunks of the defendant's Arab testimony and the judge's Hebrew questioning.

Palestinian lawyers complain of problems seeing clients, or even discovering the charges. Files, recorded only in Hebrew, routinely go missing. Inside the court, the defence expects little success.

"Out of maybe 1,600 files in my office during the intifada, we managed to get acquittals in 18. Those were purely technical legal faults," said Raji Sourani, a lawyer who heads the Gaza Centre for Rights and Law.

On a recent day behind the barbed-wire and chain-link fence at a court in Gaza City, the blue-garbed prisoners were jammed into the dock. About half had room to sit.

Most faced charges for minor crimes such as writing graffiti or distributing leaflets. But a slogan scrawled across a wall could cost a youth two years in jail.

The court turned to the case of another young Palestinian. The prosecutor read the charge sheet — caught writing graffiti.

"But I don't know how to write," protested the defendant.

The charge was amended to read that he was a lookout for activists writing graffiti and the judge sentenced him to 21 months — the same as Mr. Sharif.

Prisoners exuded the camaraderie of shared hardship — being arrested by the army is a normal part of growing up. There was little display of emotion since both sides knew their roles well.

A half dozen Israeli soldiers were positioned around the small courtroom to watch the prisoners and a few relatives. One grabbed the family photos which a mother tried to pass to her son. Others, doing their yearly military ser-

vice, looked anxious to resume civilian life.

Almost 95 per cent of prisoners "plea bargain," pleading guilty in exchange for a reduced sentence rather than face further delays by being sent back to prison to await a new trial date.

Besides, as the judge reminded one prisoner, pleading innocent would mean fresh questioning. Since Israel officially condones "moderate physical pressure" in interrogation, there is a high percentage of confessions.

"If you refuse and go through the procedures, they will double the sentence," said Mr. Sourani, who has defended Palestinians in the Gaza courts for 14 years. "If a trial lasts five to seven minutes, it is fantastic."

Throughout the Palestinian revolt the numbers in court have risen and sentences have lengthened. But in basic ways the military court system has not changed since 1967. Lawyer Fayez Abu Rahme, who retired in 1983, said he won only a handful of cases in 15 years of appearances.

"All the powers the military courts have in the territories are a product of the occupation," said Dan Assan, an Israeli lawyer handling human rights cases. "Therefore military justice cannot be justice as we know it."

Military rule was designed to be temporary, but after 24 years there is no Israeli move to withdraw. The courts' priority is to serve the security forces, not the Palestinian residents.

"This is keeping a minimum of order and law, but they pay a high price in regard to legal proceedings and human rights," said Mr. Assan.

"The solution would be either to decide that we are staying there and build a juridical system that is worth its name — or not to stay and turn over the system to local authorities," he said. "But I am not optimistic."

Palestinians want U.S. acknowledgement

(Continued from page 1)

proves our point that the Israelis are irresponsibly working against international law and are not interested in giving up sovereignty over land or water."

About Jerusalemites' participation in peace talks, Mr. Hussein said that "this was not a condition but a fact. Already two of the three of the team

meeting Mr. Baker are from Jerusalem. If no Palestinian from East Jerusalem is allowed to participate in negotiations then no Israeli from West Jerusalem should participate as well."

Asked about the linkage between stopping settlements and the Arab boycott of Israel, Mr. Hussein said: During the Gulf war we heard repeatedly

that aggression should not be rewarded. The settlements are illegal and an aggression as well as an obstacle to peace. Even so we are still wondering whether Israel will accept this very generous Arab position."

Ms. Ashrawi said about the Israelis: "I don't get the feeling that they are going to respond positively. I think that they will continue in their policy of evasion and procrastination."

Sharaa

(Continued from page 1)

anniversary of the revolution that ended Egypt's monarchy.

He said Israel must "halt actions which oppose and put obstacles in front of the peace process, primarily its settlement activities in the occupied Arab territories."

On Friday, the Egyptian leader suggested that Arab countries end their boycott of Israel in exchange for suspension of settlement construction in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Mr. Baker applauded the idea, which also was accepted by Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Oman, Bahrain, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates.

So far Israel has refused, saying settlements should be negotiated, whereas the boycott is an illegal act of war that should be stopped.

Egypt, Syria, Jordan and Lebanon have also agreed to the U.S. peace proposals. They would have the United States and the Soviet Union convene a peace conference, to be attended by the United Nations and Israel and its Arab neighbours.

Iraqi

(Continued from page 1)

want the sanctions strictly enforced until President Saddam Hussein is ousted or steps aside.

Iraq has oil reserves of some 100 billion barrels, second only to Saudi Arabia. Oil exports are its economic lifeline.

Prince Saddam's report noted that extensive repairs were needed on Iraq's oil industry infrastructure, particularly around the southern port city of Basra, if pre-war production levels were to be restored.

"The mission therefore recommends that Iraq be allowed to import over a four-month period \$1 billion worth of equipment, spare parts and consumable materials to start restoration of the oil sector," the report said.

The U.N. mission found that the two export pipelines running from Iraq to the Mediterranean through Turkey can operate at a daily volume of 1.34 million barrels.

'Stoned' 'Joshi' plays 'ping-pong' in Jordan

By P.V. Vivekanand

Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — "Ping-pong," "stoned," "Joshi," "good-bye," "Jerusalem" and "Friday the 13th" — what do they have in common except that one could perhaps come with an improvised phrase to say "Stoned Joshi" said "good-bye" to "ping-pong" in "Jerusalem" on Friday the 13th?

Very little else indeed, except that they are some of the most common computer viruses found in Jordan in recent months, bringing an international plague, hitherto little-felt in the Kingdom, right into the body and soul of computer systems in the country.

They have created perennial headaches for local computer dealers and users alike, with at least two to three cases surfacing every week.

For the average user of an isolated single-terminal personal computer the problem may not be as grave as that of a commercial bank with multi-terminal stations and a centralised data storage system.

"I don't know what hit my system," said Hussein Odeh, who maintains a personal computer at home. "I was playing a game and all I saw was a sudden flash of rainbow across the screen and then the machine went 'kaput'. I could not get the system going again at all."

It did not pose much of a problem for Mr. Odeh in terms of loss of data since his files had back-up copies in diskettes.

But Nader Al Shawish, a businessman, lost precious data related to bank accounts and

business transactions, leaving him not a very happy man indeed. "I wish I could get my hands on the guy who created whatever it was that turned my files into gibberish — that was how he translated his frustration. No doubt it, a sentiment shared by millions around the world."

Whether Mr. Shawish and others like him could have saved themselves a lot of trouble if they were careful enough not to have used pirated programmes in subject to debate since in most cases there are no foolproof means to diagnose or locate the source of the virus after the damage has been caused.

"Over 600 different types of computer viruses have surfaced around the world, and we in Jordan have come across dozens of them," said Jean-Claude Elias, a leading dealer of computer systems compatible with that of International Business Machines (IBM).

Some of the viruses are relatively harmless in that they could be eliminated without having to lose data stored in hard disks, but others have no cure at all except to reformat the entire system, which means the loss of all stored data," he said.

"We always advise our clients to keep back-up copies of files in diskettes so that total loss of data could be averted," he added.

"It does not take more than 10 minutes every day to make copies," he noted. "For some people it may be a headache and botheration, but there is no other way to ensure that data is not lost."

George Hodli of Special Systems, the authorised dealers of IBM systems in Jordan, agreed. "There are viruses which hit data

files and there are others which affect programmes," Mr. Hodli said. In these cases there are software tools — scanning and cleaning programmes which can take care of the problem most of the time. But when a virus hits the "absolute sector" of a system — the part of a computer which is not user-controlled — then the only solution is a total reformatting of the entire system, he added.

There are various levels of "forming" which could be determined only after assessing the damages caused. In some cases, most files could be recovered, but in other cases all data could be completely lost.

But, whether recoverable or not, loss of painfully stored computer data as a result of someone playing out a whim "is not a nice feeling," said Ata Mifteh, a university student. "You feel violated and have an urge to go and bash the face of whoever did it to you. The frustration builds when you understand the helplessness of the situation."

Creating computer virus "is not that difficult" for programmers, and the result of a few hours of work in implanting a virus could result in the loss of years of toil for others, Mr. Elias noted.

The "Friday the 13th" virus, for instance, is programmed to strike at the stroke of midnight of any Friday which happens to be the 13th of the month. It created an international uproar and widespread alert in 1988, and IBM and manufacturers of IBM-compatible systems sought to avert the hit with special software.

The campaign was largely successful in Europe and the Middle East with a few cases reported to

dealers. But within the United States, the virus gobbled up billions and billions of characters stored in data systems which operate on a round-the-clock basis. At least half a dozen banks had to engage additional staff for months to restore some semblance of normality to the state of accounts.

"Good-Bye" is more sinister. Relatively difficult to detect, the virus can pounce on unsuspecting users anytime, anywhere with a "Good-Bye" flash across the computer screen. The entire system is rendered useless in a matter of microseconds.

Mr. Hodli of Special Systems said IBM has answers to most kinds of viruses, but a lot depends on when the presence of a virus is detected and how far it has gone in destroying programme or data files.

"As a rule we always provide original software to our clients with guarantees from the manufacturer," he said. "We advise our clients not to use any programme at random and not to be tempted by new programmes."

Exchanging copied programmes is definitely unhealthy, he added.

Mr. Elias, general manager of General Computer Corporation, fully agreed with this and said he adheres to three "cardinal" principles to avoid the problem of viruses:

— Insistence on using original software obtained directly from developers as far as possible;

— Avoiding using any new programmes except after a thorough scanning process to detect viruses if any; and

— Denial of access to computers except for those who are trusted and authorised.

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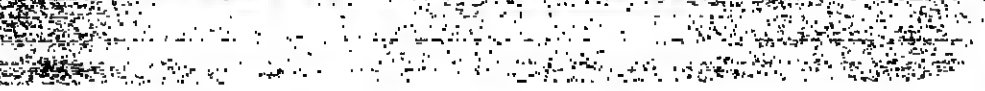
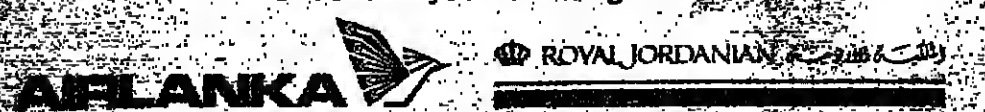
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Financial Markets

U.S. Dollar in International Markets

Currency	NEW YORK CLOSE 19/7/91	TOKYO CLOSE 22/7/91
Sterling Pound	1.6945	1.6865
Deutsche Mark	1.7475	1.7525
Swiss Franc	1.5115	1.5145
French Franc	5.9315	5.9722
Japanese Yen	156.40	156.65
European Currency Unit	1.1265	1.1260

European Currency Unit Rates

Currency	1 MTH	3 MTHS	6 MTHS	12 MTHS
U.S. Dollar	5.81	6.00	6.25	6.55
Sterling Pound	10.93	10.82	10.88	10.68
Deutsche Mark	8.75	9.08	9.18	9.27
Swiss Franc	7.68	7.83	7.81	7.75
French Franc	9.12	9.18	9.25	9.43
Japanese Yen	7.37	7.46	7.31	7.21
European Currency Unit	9.62	9.68	9.90	9.87

Currency	USD/oz	JD/oz	USD/oz	JD/oz
Gold	370.45	7.10	Silver	2.01

Central Bank of Jordan Exchange Rate Bulletin

Currency	Bid	Offer
U.S. Dollar	.685	.687
Sterling Pound	1.1558	1.1512
Deutsche Mark	.3907	.3927
Swiss Franc	.520	.543
French Franc	.1151	.1157
Japanese Yen	.5013	.5038
Dutch Guilder	.3470	.3487
Swedish Krona	.1084	.1089
Italian Lira	.0525	.0528
Belgian Franc	.01905	.01915

Other Currencies

Currency	Bid	Offer
Bahraini Dinar	1.7800	1.7900
Lebanese Lira	.0760	.0780
Saudi Riyal	.1823	.1830
Kuwaiti Dinar		
Omani Riyal	.1850	.1860
Egyptian Pound	.1900	.2025
Omani Riyal	1.7450	1.7900
UAE Dirham	.1850	.1860
Greek Drachma	.3500	.3660
Cypriot Pound	1.4000	1.4200

CAS Indices for Amman Financial Market

Index	20/7/91 Close	21/7/91 Close
All-Share	110.88	111.03
Banking Sector	106.01	106.28
Insurance Sector	119.45	119.58
Industry Sector	115.54	115.51
Services Sector	127.17	127.42

LONDON EXCHANGE RATES

LONDON (R) — Following are the buying and selling rates for leading world currencies and gold against the dollar at mid-session on the London foreign exchange and bullion markets Monday.

One Sterling	1.6810/20	U.S. dollar	1.1590/95
One U.S. dollar	1.7555/65	Canadian dollar	1.7555/65
	1.9775/85	Deutsche marks	1.5185/90
	1.5185/90	Dutch guilders	36.13/18
	36.13/18	Swiss francs	5.9550/600
	5.9550/600	Belgian francs	1307/1308
	1307/1308	French francs	136.75/80
	136.75/80	Italian lire	6.3560/3610
	6.3560/3610	Japanese yen	6.8425/75
	6.8425/75	Norwegian crowns	6.7900/50
	6.7900/50	Danish crowns	369.85/370.35
One ounce of gold	369.85/370.35	U.S. dollars	

Report finds Third World youth hardest hit by global recession

BRUSSELS, Belgium (AP) — The global recession of the past few years has taken a harsh toll on youth, threatening to turn them into a "lost generation" by the turn of the century, a labour report has said.

"The year 2000 could become year zero for a lost generation of young workers unless there are immediate policies adopted to improve job prospects," said the report, issued by the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU).

The group represents 100 million workers from 103 nations. To reverse the trend, the trade union group urged public work programmes favouring youth employment and called on governments around the world to improve training and education.

The union said young workers make up 20 per cent of the workforce, but in the Third World, between 27 and 73 per cent of the under-25 generation is out of work.

"The problem of youth unemployment will aggravate an already perilous situation on both sides of the North-South divide," said the report entitled "The World Economic Situation — Prospects For Youth."

The report said that in Asia

only half of the youth are expected to find jobs by the turn of the century.

The report, which will be discussed at the ICFTU's world youth rally in Kingston, Jamaica, Aug. 12-16, warned that fleeing rural areas to cities will do ambitious youngsters little good in developing nations.

Cities are "strained beyond their capacity to provide the infrastructure or employment required," it said.

It noted cities like Mexico City and New Delhi already have thousands of unemployed youngsters, many of whom have no alternative to begging or looking for food among garbage.

Those who find work are mostly reduced to "an unproductive, poorly paid, and insecure job in the growing informal sector," the ICFTU asserted.

"They have a choice ranging from domestic service and the retail trade all the way down to shuffling shoes and scavenging cigarette butts," the summary said. Often they work without legal and social protection.

Migration to industrialised nations rarely offers a solution since the market for unskilled labour there cannot absorb the demand, the report said.

U.N. environment fund to disburse \$275m this year

BRUSSELS (Agencies) — A new United Nations environment fund expects to channel \$275 million to around 25 development projects in poor countries by the end of the year, a World Bank official has said.

Ian Johnson, World Bank administrator of the global environmental facility (GEF), said additional financing from the World Bank and other institutions should increase total funding of the projects to around \$700 million.

The GEF was set up last November by the World Bank, the U.N. Development Fund (UNDP) and the U.N. Environment Programme (UNEP) as a three-year pilot scheme to help poor countries meet the cost of tackling global environmental issues.

Mr. Johnson said 25 countries, including eight developing nations, had so far contributed a total of \$1.5 billion. Only countries with a per-head yearly income averaging \$4,000 or less qualify for funding.

"The GEF, while large at \$1.5 billion, is small relative to the tasks at hand," Mr. Johnson told an international conference on marine pollution in Brussels.

The 25 projects to be financed this year will focus largely on protection of biological diversity but also include schemes to tackle global warming through changes

in energy use and projects to protect the River Danube and watercourses in China.

Mr. Johnson said protecting the environment at least economic cost involved not only additional finance but also changes in regulations and economic policy — for example, ending the underpricing of water to reduce problems caused by overuse.

"Funds saved may be more important than funds spent," he said.

The World Bank has also announced that it will end support for logging in tropical forests, a practice environmentalists say destroys forests and endangers the livelihood of people.

Michel Petit, a Frenchman who heads the bank's agriculture department, said it will pay special attention to 20 countries that account for 85 acres of rain forest out of every 100. They are also countries where the forests are endangered. Among them are Brazil, Mexico, the Ivory Coast, India, Indonesia and the Philippines.

Tropical rain forests are prized not only for the food, rubber and other commercial products that come from them but especially for their vast variety of plants, birds, animals and insects. Scientists see these as an important source of new medicines and other chemicals which, once destroyed, can never be revived.

Kuwait plans to merge banks

KUWAIT (R) — The Kuwaiti government plans to merge heavily indebted state-controlled commercial banks to save them from financial ruin, Finance Minister Nasser Al Rodhan said in an interview.

Sheikh Rodhan told the newspaper Al Watan the government was also thinking of allowing foreign banks into the emirate.

Consolidating the banking system was part of a government programme to streamline the state sector and wind up companies that had made huge losses, he said.

"As to merging banks, it is one of the main subjects on the agenda now. The final decision on this subject will come out this month or next month," Sheikh Rodhan said.

Kuwaiti economists say the four state-controlled commercial banks face a bleak future and need central bank support to see them through problems exacerbated by the Gulf war.

The only other large commercial bank in Kuwait is the National Bank of Kuwait, in which the government has a minority stake, and it is in good health.

Bankers say Kuwaiti banks could be exposed by up to six billion dinars (\$20 billion), the approximate value of their total deposits, because of old debts and capital flight.

The Gulf war added to their problems by dealing a body blow to the economy in general. Many small businesses have closed.

Oil revenues, once the backbone of the economy, have disappeared and the government is seeking billions of dollars in foreign finance to keep the economy afloat.

Abdul Aziz Sultan, chairman of the Gulf Bank, ruled out any bankruptcies. He told Reuters the central bank had no qualms about using its financial muscle to help troubled banks.

Bank mergers have been on the drawing board for some time but

Iraq's invasion of Kuwait in August held up the plan.

Financial problems have bedeviled the banks since 1982 when Kuwait's unofficial secondary stock market, the Souk Al Manakh, crashed under speculative buying based on post-dated cheques.

The banks, which had 40 per cent of their investment portfolio tied up in the souk, were indebted to the tune of 1.5 billion dinars (\$5 billion) when Iraq invaded.

A further four to five billion dinars (\$13 to \$17 billion) in outstanding loans has worsened their plight.

The commercial banks are also suffering from a lack of investor confidence in the economy.

The government, battling a cashflow problem, has limited withdrawals to 6,000 dinars (\$19,000) a month from each account.

The central bank has promised to scrap the limit by Aug. 3 and

bankers say this could lead to a run on deposits.

Kuwaiti citizens cram banks daily to dump their dinars for dollars, the favourite foreign currency.

The central bank governor, Sheikh Salem Abdul Aziz Al Sabah, has warned of serious consequences for the banking system and asked depositors not to rush into swapping dinars for dollars.

The central bank has pumped millions of dollars into the banking system to prop up the dinar, which is now trading near its pre-invasion level of \$3.3.

Sheikh Rodhan said a special committee had been set up to study allowing foreign banks into the country.

"The special studies on this matter will decide the direction as to whether to allow foreign banks or not... in what size and number and how they would enter the market... by partnership for example," he said.

Morocco to open offshore banking zone in Tangier next year

RABAT (R) — Morocco will set up an offshore banking zone in the northern city of Tangier next year, senior cabinet minister Ahmed Alaoui has said.

Mr. Alaoui, minister of state without portfolio, said King Hassan would inaugurate the zone on an official visit to Tangier and northern Morocco, scheduled for his birthday in July.

Parliament passed special legislation authorising the offshore zone on June 5 but details of how the scheme will operate have still to be worked out.

Finance Minister Mohammed Berrada told parliament the zone would offer "substantial fiscal and customs advantages" to foreign banks and holding companies, which would deal only in foreign currencies and be closed to residents of Morocco.

Mr. Alaoui, writing in the pro-government daily Le Matin, said foreign operators would need to have authorisation from the finance ministry and pay a licence fee of \$25,000.

Opposition critics in parliament said the zone would meet stiff competition from other offshore zones such as Tunisia,

the Channel Islands, the Isle of Man, Luxembourg and Gibraltar.

Mr. Berrada said competition was "a factor which can only encourage us to do our best for our country's economy."

Tangier could exploit its strategic position at the western entrance to the Mediterranean, he added.

Tangier was famous as a free-wheeling banking centre when the city and the surrounding area was an international zone for 44 years. The zone was abolished in 1956 when Morocco recovered its independence.

Mr. Alaoui said the city of Tangier would be cleaned up for the opening of the offshore zone. Unsanitary shantytowns would be replaced by new homes and beggars and unofficial tourist guides taken off the streets.

The airport and road system would be improved and several new hotels built in the city, which is already one of Morocco's most popular tourist resorts, he said.

"Tangier will be able to play its role as an international financial centre... and thus return to its former vocation," Mr. Alaoui added.

South Africa turns eyes to Japan

JOHANNESBURG (R) — Investors may be wary of pumping money into South Africa as sanctions unravel, but foreign interest in trade is growing by leaps and bounds.

"South Africa has seen almost a flood of trade missions," the deputy director-general of the South African Chamber of Business, Ron Haywood, has said.

After rapidly forging new ties throughout Africa and eastern Europe, South Africa is now turning its eyes eastwards to Japan in hopes that its former top trading partner may soon lift its economic embargoes.

"Japan is one of the high (economic) growth markets with even greater trade opportunities in the short term than the U.S. or

Europe right now," Mr. Haywood said.

President George Bush this month lifted a five-year embargo which barred trade with South Africa on a wide variety of goods, and which banned investment and direct air links.

The move followed steps by the 12-nation European Community (EC) to scrap bans on trade and investment in response to sweeping reforms to dismantle apartheid.

The Danish parliament blocked implementation of the EC trade relaxation and in the U.S. a vast web of state and municipal sanctions remain in force which could take years to remove, analysts say.

Meantime the economies of

Japan and other Pacific rim countries are expected to outperform those in the West, offering attractive trade opportunities should Far East countries lift sanctions as expected.

Japanese newspapers said that Tokyo would lift sanctions on imports of iron and steel, a ban on investment and "voluntary restraint" on trade and financing later this month. The government said it was still considering the matter.

Some local analysts expect Tokyo to tread gingerly on the issue, being sensitive to the pro-sanctions lobby in the U.S. and extensive Japanese business interests there.

"I would expect the watchword may be: Tiptoe, don't go in like a thundering herd," said one private sector economist.

Japan was embarrassed at surpassing the U.S. as South Africa's largest trading partner in 1987, when two-way trade surged to \$4.27 billion from \$3.6 billion the year before.

It drew charges that it was exploiting the business vacuum left by U.S. firms which had withdrawn from the country.

To protect its huge export market in the U.S., the Japanese government bowed to American pressure to restrict trade with

South Africa. Sanctions however, were not cast in iron as in the U.S. and the EC.

Apart from the usual ban on arms and electronic equipment sales to "official apartheid-enforcement agencies," the ministry of trade and industry merely advised Japanese companies trading with South Africa not to exceed 1987 values.

Bilateral trade fell 13 per cent between 1987 and 1989 and final figures may show a further sharp fall in 1990, relegating Japan to fifth rank among South Africa's trade partners, the private sector foreign trade agency Safto says.

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ANC: Vlok resignation not enough

JOHANNESBURG (R) — The African National Congress (ANC) said Monday the resignation of Law and Order Minister Adriaan Vlok would not be enough to defuse a row over secret state funding of its political rivals.

"We want an independent judicial inquiry into all secret spending — the government has a slush fund of 380 million rand (\$127 million)," ANC spokeswoman Gill Marcus said.

Mr. Vlok, in a televised interview Sunday night, said he was considering resigning after the Weekly Mail newspaper and the London Guardian revealed that the government had made secret payments to the Inkatha Freedom Party, the ANC's main rival.

Mr. Vlok said a total of about 1.5 million rand (\$500,000) was spent over six years to support Inkatha and an allied trade union, the United Workers' Union of South Africa.

"Vlok's resignation is something we've demanded for a long time, but it should not be restricted to him," Ms. Marcus said. "In itself it would not be enough to repair relations between us and the government."

She said Defence Minister Magnus Malan and Foreign Minister Pi Botha should also be investigated to ascertain how they had spent other secret funds.

"We want a full public inquiry into the 380 million rand," she said, citing allegations of secret state hit squads and Defence Department involvement in township massacres.

About 5,000 blacks have been killed in clashes between Inkatha and the ANC in the last four years, which ANC leader Nelson Mandela says were stoked by a "third force." He also accuses security forces of siding with Inkatha.

Mr. Botha said at the weekend his ministry had paid for two Inkatha Freedom Party rallies in 1989 and 1990 as part of attempts to combat sanctions.

Many white South Africans believe that Inkatha, led by Zulu chief Mangosutho Buthelezi, would protect their economic and political interests if it came to power in a post-apartheid South Africa.

When the payments to Inkatha and the United Workers' Union were revealed last Friday, Mr. Mandela demanded the resignations of Mr. Vlok and Mr. Malan and said power-sharing talks with President F.W. de Klerk were in jeopardy.

South African newspapers urged Mr. De Klerk Monday to act quickly to restore credibility, and even pro-government editors said explanations for the Inkatha payments did not hold water.

"Supporters of the government did not expect that it would make its (negotiations) task even more difficult by shooting itself in the foot," said the Afrikaans daily Beeld.

"The anti-sanctions cloak behind which the government is

hiding is very thin," it said, adding that the revelations gave credence to allegations that police and Inkatha colluded in township violence.

The widely-read Star, referring to Mr. Vlok's assertion that the funding was a closed chapter, commented: "He was never more wrong in his life. The book has only just been opened."

In an editorial headlined "it won't wash," the financial daily Business Day said it was clear that despite government denials the payments were intended to support Inkatha against the ANC, South Africa's main black opposition group.

"If De Klerk is to fight back, he must start by restoring government's integrity," it said.

The black-readership Sowetan said Mr. De Klerk should not underestimate the magnitude of the crisis.

"If he tries a cover-up this time, his standing in the eyes of the majority of blacks will be ruined."

Pakistan Army chief fears Indian attack

ISLAMABAD (AP) — Pakistan's army chief of staff said he is concerned that India, unable to quell Muslim unrest in the border area of Jammu And Kashmir, might attack Pakistan, a military spokesman said Monday.

"It is quite likely that in sheer desperation India could launch an adventure against Pakistan," army Chief-Of-Staff Gen. Mirza Aslam Beg reportedly said in an address to soldiers during a weekend tour of eastern Punjab province, which borders India.

Gen. Beg is scheduled to retire next month.

India and Pakistan have twice gone to war over Kashmir, a former princely state divided between Hindu India and Muslim Pakistan after the subcontinent was partitioned in 1947.

"Events are fast changing in the region and the shadows of war have started appearing," Beg said in a statement distributed by the state-owned Associated Press of Pakistan (APP).

India has accused Pakistan of



Mirza Aslam Beg

He did not elaborate. The Indian embassy in Islamabad was not immediately available for comment.

India launched a military crackdown on Muslim secessionists demanding either independence or union with Pakistan. At least 2,500 people have been killed in the fighting.

India has accused Pakistan of

arming and training the militants, who freely cross the ceasefire line separating the two countries.

Pakistan denies the charges, but supports the militants' right of self-determination.

"The freedom struggle of the people of Kashmir is gaining momentum with every passing day and it is now impossible to suppress it," Gen. Beg said according to APP.

Gen. Beg also claimed that India would seek help from Israel.

"India would not be alone in its adventures against Pakistan. It would be aided by others who are fanatically out to harm and destabilise Pakistan," Gen. Beg said.

Gen. Beg described the six Israeli tourists seized in June by Muslim militants in Indian-held Kashmir as "Israeli commandos." Five of the tourists escaped the militants and one of the Israelis was killed when he jumped a guard to help free the group.

Yeltsin move to banish party cells stirs Communist defiance

MOSCOW (R) — Soviet Communists Monday denounced Russian President Boris Yeltsin's decree banishing party cells from factories and state institutions in the republic as unconstitutional.

Party secretaries in factories defended their cells, once the backbone of Communist control over industry, saying Yeltsin's attempt to disband them violated the constitution.

"The decree also contradicts the norms of international political freedoms," Vladimir Markov, spokesman for the Russian Communist Party, said.

"This is a step away from civilisation," he added.

Mr. Yeltsin's first major decree as president of the Soviet Union's biggest republic ordered party cells in all factories and local government on Russian soil to disband in two weeks. The move appeared to be a step towards his primary goal of excluding party cells from the Kremlin-controlled army and KGB.

There was no reaction from President Mikhail Gorbachev, who is struggling to head off a split in his once omnipotent party.

"The party existed in this factory even before the (1917) Bol-

shevik Revolution and it cannot be banished by (Yeltsin's) decree," Tatyana Kashkarova, party secretary at Moscow's giant Hammer And Sickle Steel Works, said. "This cannot apply to us."

Ms. Kashkarova said her plant, like about 70 per cent of industrial enterprises in the capital, was controlled by central Soviet authorities, rather than the republic.

After the Bolshevik Revolution, Communist leaders used party cells to keep a tight rein on the economy, ministries and the security forces. Party "cells" formed a parallel command line, often dictating policy on the spot.

Since Mr. Gorbachev formally ended the party's constitutional guarantee of power last year, the cells' influence has waned in many areas. But secretaries still wield considerable influence in some conservative provinces of Russia as well as in the Soviet security forces.

The physical removal of the cells would be, at least, a serious blow to the mass membership of the party. In the past it has kept contact with members, holding meetings in factories dur-

ing working time. A move outside the factory gates could speed the drift away from the party Mr. Yeltsin left a year ago.

The decree is likely to draw fierce criticism at Thursday's meeting of the Communist Party leadership, which is expected to highlight deep splits between orthodox and reformist Communists.

Alexander Rutskoi, head of a new reformist "Communist For Democracy" Movement within the party, said he expected sharp differences to emerge at the Central Committee plenum.

"We have reached the time when we must divide into ideological sections," he said.

But he insisted that orthodox communists would be responsible if they were any outright split in the party that has ruled the country for 74 years.

Mr. Yeltsin's decree banned all political parties from activity within Russian plants, but it was clearly aimed at the Communists, who are the only party with such a network.

It called on Russian deputies to introduce a bill in the central Soviet parliament removing party cells from the Kremlin-controlled army, KGB and Interior Ministry.



Alexander Dubcek

Dubcek quits Slovak party

PRAGUE (R) — Reformist politician Alexander Dubcek has quit the Public Against Violence (VPN) movement he co-founded 20 months ago and which helped overthrow Communist rule in Czechoslovakia.

"I have quit VPN because it abandoned centrist policy," Mr. Dubcek told the Czechoslovak News Agency (CTK) Sunday.

Mr. Dubcek, whose "Prague Spring" reforms were crushed by a Soviet-led invasion in 1968, did not spell out his reasons more clearly.

But political analysts said VPN, which is part of the governing coalition, had moved rightwards while Mr. Dubcek, a parliamentary chairman, had joined criticism of the government's tough economic reform programme.

Mr. Dubcek, who had lived in disgrace and seclusion for many years until VPN was founded in Slovakia in November 1989, was hailed as a returning hero when he appeared at massive protest rallies that rapidly forced the Communist Party to abandon its 40-year hold on power.

Along with its Czech counterpart Civic Forum, founded by President Vaclav Havel, VPN focussed opposition to Communism.

Mr. Dubcek became parliamentary chairman in December 1989 and swore in Mr. Havel as Czechoslovakia's new president. He remained in the post following free elections in June 1990, which Civic Forum and VPN won by a landslide.

But both movements have since broken up. VPN, which has four members of the cabinet including Prime Minister Marian Calfa, split in April when former Slovak Premier Vladimir Meciar led a breakaway faction, now called the Movement For Democratic Slovakia (HZDS).

The U.N. official, Dennis McNamara, said it would be the first such shipment since 1975. The Khmer Rouge seized power in Cambodia that year and began its bloody rule during which more than 1 million of Cambodia's 8 million people died.

Vietnam invaded in late 1978 and installed a new government which continues to fight guerrilla groups, including the Khmer Rouge.

Thailand has backed the guerrillas but agreed with authorities in Phnom Penh to the U.N. road delivery on humanitarian grounds. Mr. McNamara, the U.N. secretary general's deputy special representative for Cambodia assistance programme, will accompany the delivery along with another U.N. official.

Mr. McNamara said he hoped the route will be used for other deliveries of humanitarian aid to Cambodia. Previously, medical supplies were delivered by ship, from Singapore or flown into Phnom Penh from Vietnam. The land route is quicker, simpler and cheaper, he said.

The road to Poipet had been considered too dangerous for relief officials to use, but fighting has declined significantly since the warring factions began a truce on May 1.

Mr. McNamara said the U.N. drugs are the main supply for Cambodia's provincial hospitals, and hundreds of thousands of people have benefited from them.

Army chief refuses post in Sandinista leadership

MANAGUA (AP) — At a weekend congress, the Sandinista Front voted to shift policy-making to an elected assembly and the country's military chief, Gen. Humberto Ortega, declined a return to the party's leadership.

The moves came Sunday amid a campaign by Gen. Ortega's brother Daniel, the former president trounced in 1990 elections, to revamp the tarnished image of what remains Nicaragua's largest and most influential party.

Gen. Humberto Ortega declined election to the party's elite directorate — formally its ruling body — in order to stay on as military chief under President Violeta Barrios de Chamorro.

"I hope you will be understanding, but I have to continue the job of fulfilling my duties," he told the more than 1,000 delegates as they moved to nominate him.

Daniel Ortega and several other incumbent members of the

directorate were chosen by the delegates to return to the 10-member panel.

In his address, Gen. Humberto Ortega said he was declining the nomination to help complete the transition from one-party Sandinista rule to Mrs. Chamorro's civilian administration.

Following Mrs. Chamorro's election victory, Gen. Humberto Ortega resigned from the Sandinista directorate so he could stay on as armed forces chief.

Critics of Mrs. Chamorro in her loose governing coalition say the general has been too slow to demobilise a powerful army long run by the Sandinistas and exerts too much influence on behalf of Sandinista interests.

In addition, former rebels who fought Sandinista rule and disbanded after Mrs. Chamorro's victory claim the government had reneged on promises of land and other assistance.

Australia's worst oil spill widens, ship may be sunk

SYDNEY (R) — A ruptured Greek oil tanker, responsible for what is termed Australia's worst oil spill, was being towed out to sea Monday and may be sunk, authorities said.

"It is by far the largest problem that we've ever had in Australia — terms of an oil spill," Shippit Minister Bob Collins said.

The Australian Broadcasting Corporation radioed.

He added that the 97,083 tonne tanker Kirki which has created a 40-kilometre slick off Western Australia, would be sunk if that was the recommendation of maritime experts at the scene.

The Kirki, carrying 80,000 tonnes of oil, radioed for help in the early hours of Sunday after a fire broke out aboard.

Rescuers arrived to find the ship listing badly to starboard, its bow shorn off, three forward holds breached and the front section engulfed in flames and sooty black smoke.

The 37 crew were winched off the vessel by helicopters in 25-knot winds and five-metre swells.

"It's a catastrophe," officials told a news conference in Perth late Sunday. "It's the worst category you can have, a major oil

spill. It cannot be contained as it is now."

The tanker has spilled an estimated 12,000 tonnes of light crude oil into the sea about 40 kilometres off Serravallo, a coastal fishing town 170 kilometres north of Perth.

Rodney Hutchison of Canberra's maritime Rescue Coordination Centre said the tanker was being towed out to sea, away from Western Australia's valuable crayfish areas, to smoother waters where the remaining crude may be transferred to other vessels.

He said the slick was moving slowly southwest away from the coast, and was not at present threatening seabird nestings and colonies of Australian sea lions on five nearby islands.

The cause of the fire and the bow's break-up is unknown. Although the Kirki has taken water, authorities say its remaining eight holds are intact and the tanker appears salvageable.

The spill dwarfs another major accident off Western Australia in February when the Japanese bulk carrier Sanko Harvest ran aground, spilling 750 tonnes of oil and fertiliser into the sea.

U.N. to make overland aid shipment to Cambodia

BANGKOK (AP) — The United Nations will make an overland relief delivery to Cambodia's capital from Thailand for the first time since 1975, a senior U.N. official said Monday.

The shipment containing 7,000 kilograms (15,400 pounds) of drugs for treating tuberculosis, malaria and leprosy will be taken across the Thai border Wednesday to Poipet town in northwestern Cambodia. From there, it will be trucked by the Cambodian Red Cross to the capital, Phnom Penh, about 350 kilometres south east.

The U.N. official, Dennis McNamara, said it would be the first such shipment since 1975.

The Khmer Rouge seized power in Cambodia that year and began its bloody rule during which more than 1 million of Cambodia's 8 million people died.

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U.S. plans to join Asia in drugs war

KUALA LUMPUR (R) — The United States, concerned about Burma as a drug source, plans to launch a joint anti-drugs campaign with South East Asian nations, a senior U.S. official said Monday.

"Underdeveloped and undemocratic, Burma will poison the region with narcotics and remain a cancer of instability," U.S. Undersecretary of State Robert Zoellick said.

In Burma, tyranny still prevails over the popular will," he told the annual meeting of foreign ministers of the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) and their seven main trading or "dialogue" partners.

He said the United States would participate in a conference on coordinated drugs strategy, which could include joint enforcement, extradition agreements and control over the flow of drugs money.

"We are prepared to work with the ASEAN nations and dialogue partners to launch a cooperative programme to attack the noxious narcotics trade that lures, degrades and kills our people," Mr. Zoellick said.

The three-day meeting between ASEAN — Brunei, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore and Thailand — and dialogue partners Canada, the United States, the European Community, Japan, Australia, New Zealand and South Korea began Monday.

A major source of heroin is the poppy-growing Golden Triangle area straddling Thailand, Laos and Burma, where the military government refused to hand over power to representatives popularly elected last year.

Meanwhile Japanese Foreign Minister Taro Nakayama called Monday for a new security forum to be set up in the Asia-Pacific region, saying doubts remained

about Soviet intentions in the area.

Mr. Nakayama told a post-ministerial conference (PMC) that there should be regular talks on security among them.

"I believe it would be meaningful and timely to use the ASEAN post ministerial conference as a process of political discussions designed to improve the sense of security among us," he said at the opening of the three-day meeting in Malaysia.

On Sunday Soviet Deputy Prime Minister Yuri Maslyukov, said the Soviet Union backed a proposal for non-Communist South East Asian nations to set up a forum to discuss the security of the region.

"The Soviet Union stands for the lowering of the level of confrontation everywhere and accordingly for the creation of negotiation mechanisms on security issues in the Asia-Pacific region," Mr. Maslyukov told reporters.

START treaty sets stage for big debate over missile defences

WASHINGTON (AP) — Completion of a historic U.S.-Soviet nuclear arms reduction treaty sets the stage for a potentially explosive debate over an issue that could unravel the new treaty: The U.S. anti-missile defence plan.

The Soviets have said for years that if the United States put into operation a Star Wars system capable of shooting down Soviet missiles they would consider pulling out of the Strategic Arms Reduction Talks, or START, which led to the new treaty.

The Soviet fear is that a U.S. defence, currently prohibited by another treaty in effect since 1972, would require in response a new buildup of Soviet offensive missiles — exactly the weapons they agreed to reduce by about 35 per cent in the START treaty.

In the United States' view, both superpowers could make a cooperative transition from offensive forces to mainly defensive ones, although it would require either revising or scrapping the treaty that prohibits defences.

The Soviet threat to withdraw from START has held little public attention recently, mainly because the arms talks were bogged down and Congress had been slashing the Star Wars development budget and refusing to approve building such a system.

Now the blanket that muffled the Star Wars debate has been lifted.

President Bush and Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev announced final agreement on START last Wednesday, and they are to sign the deal at a July 30-31 summit.

Coincidentally, on the same day the START agreement was announced, the Senate Armed

Services Committee approved a defence spending bill that includes for the first time explicit approval to develop an anti-missile defensive system.

The anti-missile system in the Senate bill is a far cry from the impenetrable shield in space envisioned by former President Ronald Reagan when he launched the Strategic Defence Initiative (SDI) in March 1983. In fact, it includes none of the exotic space-based weaponry that gave Mr. Reagan's plan the Star Wars nickname.

The Senate plan calls for initially building only ground-based missiles capable of shooting down long-range ballistic missiles. That would comply with the 1972 anti-ballistic missile (ABM) treaty, which prohibits any missile defence other than a system of 100 ground-based interceptors at a single site.

But the Senate bill also calls for negotiations with the Soviet by 1996 on modifying the ABM treaty to permit an expanded ground-based missile defence. It puts the idea of space-based weaponry on the back burner, but it provides research money for that area.

The House version of the 1992 defence bill is tougher on Strategic defence. It includes none of the \$650 million the administration wants for research on the space-based component, and it does not authorise building even a ground-based system. It essentially kills the Star Wars idea while accelerating work on a system to defend against small, short-range missiles.

The administration has not said whether it would accept the Senate version, but administration

officials have said they are pleased that at least it gives a go-ahead to build defences.

The logic behind the Senate plan is that, after spending more than \$20 billion studying Strategic Defence, it's time to build something that would at least give the United States a limited means of defending itself against missile attack.

Critics say a limited ground-based defensive system might be wise. But they worry that this would be only a first step toward an expanded, space-based system that would cost unknown billions of dollars and destroy the ABM treaty.

The new treaty, which could take effect as early as 1992, is to be implemented over seven years and would be binding for 15 years.

The Bush administration, echoing the Reagan administration before it, asserts that the Soviets will not withdraw from the START deal because they will eventually accept the U.S. argument that missile defences are good for both sides.

Earlier this month, however, the Pentagon's annual report to Congress on U.S. missile defence research said no evidence could be found in Soviet media or official statements that the government was likely to change its mind about space-based defences.

That suggests that either the administration will have to settle instead for a modest ground-based system, or it will have to squeeze tens of billions more dollars out of Congress for Star Wars and risk having the Soviets dump the only treaty constraining nuclear arms.

COLUMN

Demi Moore gives birth to a girl

LOS ANGELES (R) — Actress Demi Moore, who created a stir by posing pregnant and nude on a magazine cover, has given birth to a girl weighing three kilograms, a spokesman has said. Moore, 28, married to actor Bruce Willis, 36, had a healthy baby, Scout Laine Willis. Sunday, said spokesman Paul Block. The picture of Moore, obscured only by carefully placed hands, on the cover of Vanity Fair led to the magazine being sold in a white wrapper in parts of the United States. Some retailers refused to stock the edition, but others placed extra orders.

Tasmanian skulls return home

HOBART (R) — Eleven aboriginal skulls — one of them thought to be that of the last full-blooded aborigine from the Australian island state of Tasmania — have been returned by Scotland after a 16-year campaign by Tasmanian aborigines. Members of the Tasmanian Aboriginal Centre brought the skulls released by Scotland's Edinburgh University back to the state capital Hobart. They left behind another 260 to 300 sets of remains of aborigines from other parts of Australia. "They are now home where they belong... they will never be put on display again," said Denise Gardiner, state secretary of the centre. One of the skulls is thought to be that of William Laney, also known as "king Billy", who died in 1869 and is believed by many historians to be the last full-blooded Tasmanian aborigine.

Lacroix Versace kick off fashion shows

PARIS (R) — Designers Christian Lacroix and Gianni Versace kicked off the autumn-winter haute couture shows this weekend with opulent and colourful collections that put a strong Latin flavour on the Paris catwalks. Lacroix presented a pared-down collection Sunday, a welcome surprise for those who had tired of the loud prints and gaudy chateaux-and-fuchsia colour combinations of his earlier shows. This year toned-down tweeds and plaids were trimmed with fur collars and cuffs. Shavels glistened with metallic thread and gold straw hats shone under the spotlights. At 40, the designer from Provence has discovered the beauty of a sleeker line, fluid fabrics and more discreet colour combinations. Bot Lacroix's Flamenco-style dresses were, as usual, the highlight.

Norway's crown prince comes of age

OSLO, Norway (AP) — A crown prince who wishes girls wouldn't hug him so often in public came of age as heir to the Norwegian throne. Crown Prince Haakon's royal kin, other European blue-bloods and government leaders gathered to celebrate his 18th birthday. "I don't think I'm that different from most 18-year-olds," Prince Haakon told reporters this week. "I'm not the big charmer." Teenage Norwegian girls disagree. Dozens have hugged him during recent public appearances and embracing the royal heir has become a national fad. "All this hugging isn't the most positive thing I have experienced," Prince Haakon said. "Sometimes it's nicer when people just smile, wave, shout hurrahs and things like that." Prince Haakon became crown prince when his father, King Harald V, assumed the throne on Jan. 17. Now that he has turned 18, he will act as Norway's figurehead monarch when his father is abroad. Upon his father's death, he would become the fourth king of modern Norway. "I don't think I feel mature enough to step into that role yet," Prince Haakon said. Celebrations included a gala aboard the royal yacht Norge, ball at the royal palace in Oslo and a dinner with the government. Among the guests were Britain's Prince Edward, Sweden's King Carl Gustaf and Queen Silvia, and Denmark's Queen Margrethe and her son Crown Prince Frederik. Prince Haakon has already established himself "as a prince charming, a mother-in-law's dream." Dagbladet called him "every Norwegian girl's dream" and "the action prince." He enjoys white-water kayaking, parasailing, sailing, racing, mountain climbing and waterskiing.

Gambling — the new game in Moscow, legal or not

MOSCOW (AP) — Siran, an impeccably tailored suit and flowered tie, casually laid a row of \$100 bills on the blackjack table. He said he had gambled about 10 times a month since January and lost \$300,000 during a recent four-day period.

Gambling and buying or selling hard currency are technically illegal for Soviet citizens, but four of Moscow's five new dollar casinos allow them to play.

One is the Casino Moscow, whose general director, Alexander Pinayev, said, "It hasn't been clearly determined whether they should be allowed to gamble or not."

His casino, Moscow's first legal dollar gambling hall, opened last year as a partnership of the city council and the Modern Games Company of Hamburg, Germany.

Gambling of various kinds has existed in the Soviet Union for years, despite the Communist tenet that making money for its own sake is wrong.

In many department stores, customers pay a few rubles for chances to win scarce items like imported beer, French cognac and Western cigarettes.

Legal lottery tickets are sold on Moscow street corners. Cars and appliances are the big prizes; smaller ones include French perfume and toys.

Gambling tables for rubles, legal and illegal, also have sprung up.

For Soviets like Siran, who spoke on condition his surname be withheld, the real action is in dollars. Most are the new rich, entrepreneurs who have made fortunes because of President Mikhail Gorbachev's economic reforms.

Siran,